

1st FOR **BLU-RAY PLASMA LCD LED 3DTV**

BD to go
Systems megatest

HOME CINEMA

First Look LG FLAGSHIP PLASMA PANASONIC DEBUT LED
PROCELLA P-SERIES SPEAKERS SAMSUNG BUDGET 46IN 3DTV

Choice

3D superhero

Exclusive: Philips reinvents
LED Cinema 21:9

PLUS
RUNCO'S DLP
PROJECTOR
DELIGHT

**BIPOLE
POWER**

Crystal Audio's
slimline speaker
sensations
p54

Monster sound

Marantz joins AVR elite
with best-ever amp

Inside BOOST YOUR SYSTEM WITH ACCESSORIES →
PROJECTION SCREENS MADE EASY → BLU-RAY REVIEWS...

tech **audio**
ISSUE 187 NOVEMBER 2010 £4.30
11>
9 771359 627088

future
MEDIA WITH PASSION

marantz®
because music matters

DON'T
LOSE A NOTE OF
THE ORIGINAL

www.marantz.com

HOME CINEMA

Choice

Future Publishing Limited
2 Balcombe Street, London NW1 6NW
Tel: 020 7042 4000 Fax: 020 7042 4539

EDITORIAL

Editor-in-Chief Steve May
Editor Chris Jenkins
Deputy Editor Mark Craven
News Editor Anton van Beek
Art Editor John Rook
Production Editor Jill Lubetkin

CONTRIBUTORS

Takura Maeva, Richard Stevenson, John Archer, Barry Fox, Adam Rayner, Adrian Justins, Martin Pipe, Jim Hill
Photography Rob Monk, Kevin Nixon, Will Ireland
Creative Director Robin Abbott
Editorial Director Jim Douglas

ADVERTISING

Advertising Director Rob Elms 020 7042 4272
Senior Sales Executive Julian Tozer 020 7042 4273
Sales Executive Tony Martin 020 7042 4253
Advertising Fax 020 7042 4159
London Sales Director Malcolm Stoodley
Ad Director Central Sales Jude Daniels 020 7042 4105
Commercial Development Manager, Future 360
Luke Bilton, 0207 0424112 Nortcliffe 020 7042 4153

MARKETING

Brand Marketing Manager Libby Brook

CIRCULATION

Trade Marketing Director Rachel Cock

PRINT & PRODUCTION

Production Managers Ralph Stringer, Roberta Lealand
Head of Production Richard Mason
Image manipulation James Wootton, Thadd Hendrickse, Steven Wood
Printed in the UK by Polestar Colchester and Wyndeham
Grange on behalf of Future
Distributed in the UK by Seymour Distribution Ltd, 2 East
Poultry Avenue, London EC1A 9PT. Tel: 020 7429 4000
Veneered boards: supplied by Ton Xanthas @ Reliance
Veneer Company LTD (London 020 8802 2361,
www.relianceveneers.co.uk) Wallpaper: Supplied from
wallpaperdirect (www.wallpaperdirect.co.uk) & John
Lewis (www.johnlewis.com)

LICENSING

Head of International Licensing
Tim Hudson, thudson@futurenet.co.uk
Tel: +44 (0)1225 442244 Fax: +44 (0)1225 732275

FUTURE PUBLISHING LIMITED

Group Publisher Pat Eggington
Publishing Director Stuart Anderton
Chief Operating Officer Simon Wear
Chief Executive Mark Wood

WANT TO SUBSCRIBE?

Phone our UK hotline on 0844 848 2852
Subscribe online at www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk
Next issue on sale: 21 October 2010

Want to work for Future?
Visit www.futurenet.com/jobs



Future produces carefully targeted magazines, websites and events for people with a passion. We publish more than 100 magazines, websites and events and we export or license our publications to 90 countries across the world.

Future plc is a public company
quoted on the London Stock
Exchange (symbol: FUTR).

www.futureplc.com

Chief Executive Steve Spring
Non-executive Chairman Roger Parry
Group Finance Director John Bowman
Tel: +44 (0)20 7042 4000 (London)
Tel: +44 (0)1225 442244 (Bath)

© Future Publishing Limited 2010. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be used or reproduced without the written permission of the publisher, Future Publishing Limited (company number 2008885) is registered in England and Wales. The registered office of Future Publishing Limited is at Beauford Court, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW. All information contained in this magazine is for information only and is, as far as we are aware, correct at the time of going to press. Future cannot accept any responsibility for errors or inaccuracies in such information. Readers are advised to contact manufacturers and retailers directly with regard to the price of products/services referred to in this magazine. If you submit unsolicited material to us, you automatically grant Future a licence to publish your submission in whole or in part in all editions of the magazine, including licensed editions worldwide and in any physical or digital format throughout the world. Any material you submit is sent at your risk and, although every care is taken, neither Future nor its employees, agents or subcontractors shall be liable for loss or damage. Home Cinema Choice™ is the trademark of Future Publishing Limited.



We are committed to only using magazine paper which is derived from well managed, certified forests and chlorine-free manufacture. Future Publishing and its paper suppliers have been independently certified in accordance with the rules of the FSC (Forest Stewardship Council).



Projection screens: find one to suit you, p22



WELCOME

While this issue has been in production, we've been away in Berlin at the giant IFA show, so you'll find a full round-up of all the latest home cinema tech both on our website now (www.homecinemachoice.com),



and in next month's magazine.

But because we're ahead of the curve, in this issue we can offer you an exclusive preview of one of the stars of the show - Philips' latest Cinema 21:9 TV. If the original was swoony, the addition of LED backlighting and 3D to the new model has made it even more irresistible. Read all about it on page 28.

If, on the other hand, you're contemplating a video projector, don't miss our screen guide on page 22 – it's the best advice you'll find anywhere on choosing and using a projection screen.

With a killer Marantz amp on page 42 and some stunning Crystal Audio speakers on page 54, there's something for everyone this month. And don't forget you can win a Sony TV and Simpsons DVDs, too on page. The fun starts here...!

Chris Jenkins
Editor

TEAM HCC

Steve May:
HCC's Editor-in-Chief has a stunning 20+ years as a CE journo on his clock



Anton van Beek:
News Ed Anton began his pro-videophile career over 11 years ago



Mark Craven:
HCC's newly-appointed Deputy Editor cut his teeth on the Sub's bench



Chris Jenkins:
Our ISF-calibrated Editor used to run Future's Tech Laboratories



John Rook:
Art Editor John first worked on HCC back in 1999, when TVs were made of wood



Jill Lubetkin:
HCC's Prod Ed is new to the mag, but a stalwart figure of the AV department



MENU

WIN
THE SIMPSONS
DVDs & A
SONY HDTV
see page 76

BULLETIN

The place for hot products, trends and technology. Starts... p7

08 Northern lights

'Affordable high-end' is the key to PSB Speakers' Imagine 5.1 system

09 Sony lights up 3D projection

Sony Professional's Tak Nakane reveals all about the tech behind its 3D projector

10 Nokia's N8 AV hybrid

The mobile phone that's getting ready to take on portable media players

12 Yesterday and today

Denon celebrates its 100th anniversary with exclusive Special Edition product line

FEATURES

In-depth interviews and special reports. Starts... p22

22 Taking home cinema to the max

The definitive guide to buying a projector screen for your home cinema. Plus, we review Image Screen's new iMasque

32 Home Cinema Hero

This issue, the films of David Lynch go under the HCC microscope

74 Finishing touches

We round up the latest AV accessories

INSTALLS

Planning a home cinema? Then this is the place to be...

34 It's a family affair

Pro-installer Smartcomm unearths a basement cinema for the entire family

38 Certified: AV-holic!

Another HCC reader shares the secrets behind their AV setup

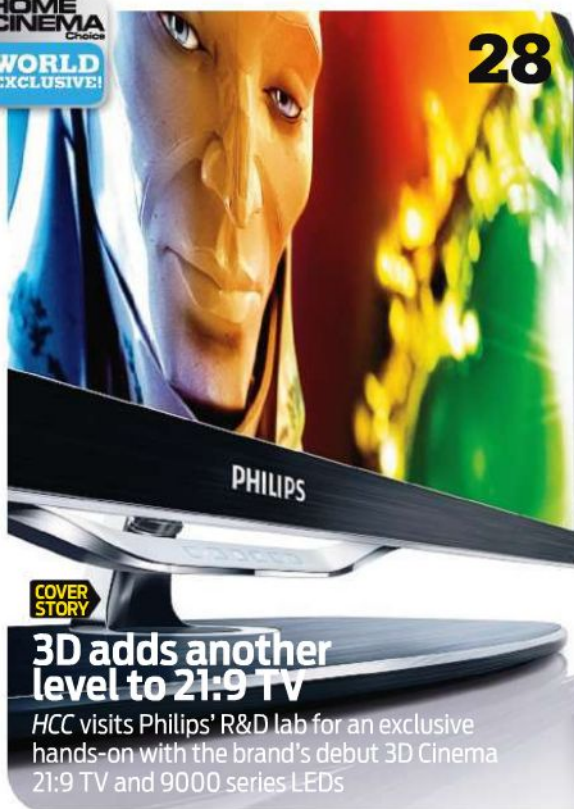
07



Single-box rebellion

Denon unleashes its 'wallet-friendly' new 5.1 speaker package

HOME CINEMA
Choice
WORLD
EXCLUSIVE!



28

3D adds another level to 21:9 TV

HCC visits Philips' R&D lab for an exclusive hands-on with the brand's debut 3D Cinema 21:9 TV and 9000 series LEDs

78 System heaven

Will any of these all-in-one Blu-ray systems make you want to scrap your separates?

LG HD-965TZ

Panasonic SC-BT230

Samsung HT-C6730-

Sony BDV-E370



TECH LABS

Our guarantee to you:

Equipment reviewed in *Home Cinema Choice* is measured and quantified by Future Tech Labs, which for more than 15 years has set the standard for independent AV test & measurement. The findings of the Tech Labs are used to underpin the subjective opinions of our Reviews team, ensuring that you receive the best possible advice when it comes to planning your next purchase



CO-STARRING

This issue's team of expert writers are the best qualified in the business

Adam Rayner:

The UK's foremost expert in extreme audio writes about bass, hi-fi and cartoons



Richard Stevenson:

Industry veteran and former Editor of UK CE trade journal ERT



Jim Hill:

Apple fanatic Hill is the former editor of *T3 Home* and a *What Hi-Fi* escapee



Martin Pipe:

Technology specialist Martin co-developed HCC's Tech Lab operation



John Archer:

The UK's most experienced TV tester cut his teeth as an early HCC staffer



Adrian Justins:

Made his name as the editor of *What Video & TV* and *What Home Cinema*





PLAYBACK

HCC's software experts cast a critical eye over the latest DVD and Blu-ray titles... p89

- 90 Kick-Ass** (BD)
- 91 AfterLife** (BD)
- Cemetery Junction** (BD)
- The Blind Side** (BD)
- Dollhouse: Season Two** (BD)
- 92 Forbidden Planet** (BD)
- La Planete Sauvage** (BD)
- Mars Attacks!** (BD)
- Dr Who: Time and the Rani** (DVD)
- Beyond the Rave** (DVD)
- 93 Robin Hood: Director's Cut** (BD)
- 94 Glee: The Complete First Season** (BD)
- The Third Man** (BD)
- Breathless** (BD)
- Mulholland Drive** (BD)
- Se7en** (BD)
- 95 The Horde** (DVD)
- 14 Blades** (BD)
- The Storm Warriors: Ultimate Edition** (BD)
- Inferno** (BD)
- [Rec]2** (BD)



REVIEWS

With a focus on performance, these are in-depth tests you can trust... p41

42 Marantz SR7005

Marantz shakes off its old reputation with this astonishing AV receiver

COVER STORY

46 LG 50PK990

Can LG take on the likes of Panasonic with its new 50in flagship plasma?

50 Humax HDR-FOX T2

Bar-raising set-top box that puts the pleasure back into watching Freeview+ HD

52 Pioneer BDP-LX53

A no-frills Blu-ray spinner that still delivers plenty of AV thrills

54 Crystal Acoustics Bipolar Series BPT5-10BL

Flatscreen-friendly floorstanders that deliver a wonderfully wide soundfield

COVER STORY

56 Samsung BD-C7500

This well-specced Blu-ray deck is designed to adorn your wall

58 Samsung LE46C750

Korean giant brings its 3D know-how to the mass market with this 46in stunner

60 Runco LS-5

This high-end projector flirts with the mainstream to spectacular effect

COVER STORY

62 Procella Audio P10/P8/P6

Custom install-based 5.1 speaker array

66 Panasonic TX-L42D25B

The plasma king tries its hand at LED TV

70 Vivadi MediaMaster MM320

Affordable multi-room media server

72 Squeezebox Touch

Network music player with added touchscreen

72 ViewSonic VMP74

Full HD network media player

PLUS...

76 Competitions

Win *The Simpsons* DVDs and a Sony HDTV. Plus, *Robin Hood: Director's Cut*, *Fanboys* and *Cop Out* Blu-rays up for grabs!

96 Feedback

For tech queries or plain old moaning, there's no better venue!

101 Select

Your essential guide to the UK's best AV gear. Peruse then choose!

114 Next Issue

All of the hottest stories and products from the IFA technology expo



98

Subscribe!

Save money on the world's best AV mag and get a TrickleStar TV TrickleSaver power-saving gizmo!



HD RECORDING MADE EASY



HIGH DEFINITION DIGITAL TV RECORDERS

DTR94320S HD / DTR94500S HD

SAGEMCOM BRINGS YOU EASY HD

- Smart, simple to use HD digital recorders
- Pause, rewind and record live TV
- Huge 320GB and 500GB hard disk drive
- Crystal clear sound quality

FREESAT + BRINGS YOU

- Instant access to the very best of HD programmes
- Over 140 TV and radio channels
- 8 day TV listings
- Parental Control

Why wait, visit www.sagemcomdigital.co.uk today



SAGEMCOM

BULLETIN

→ **News highlights** PSB IMAGINE High-performance 5.1 system speakers hit the UK
DENON SCORES A CENTURY A company engineer looks to the future **IRON MAN 2** Robert Downey Jr
reprises the role on Blu-ray and DVD **DEMO'D** One-stop guide to the AV highlights of *Psycho*
PREVIEW REPORT on Sony's improved 3D projector **AND MORE!**

Single-box rebellion

Denon DHT-1311XP → www.denon.co.uk



Denon isn't normally associated with one-box home cinema solutions, but this month the company introduces this desirable and affordable 5.1-audio package. Priced at just £500, the system comprises the brand's 110W x 5-channel AVR-1311 receiver and the SYS-391HT 5.1 speaker package (consisting of 2-way front and centre speakers, two full-range surround speakers and a newly designed 100W sub with 8in woofer). The receiver is HDMI 1.4a compliant and offers full 3D pass-through.

HCC Online...

Looking for breaking AV news,
blogs, features, & reviews?
For your daily fix visit us at
www.homecinemachoice.com
Follow us on Twitter @hccmag



Northern lights

PSB Imagine loudspeakers → www.armourhe.co.uk

Canadian high-performance loudspeaker manufacturer, PSB Speakers, has introduced an 'affordable high-end' 5.1 home cinema system to its Imagine range, dedicated to the UK market. The PSB Imagine Home Cinema system comprises the Imagine T three-driver, two-and-a-half-way tower, full-range floorstander (£1,225 per pair), the new Imagine B two-way stand/bookshelf-mounts designed for rear-channel playback (£695 a pair), the Imagine C dual-woofer horizontal two-way centre (£495) and the compact SubSeries HD8 subwoofer (£800). The latter claims to 'fool' the HD8 cabinet into behaving as a much larger enclosure with longer ports.

Partner with...

Yamaha RX-V3067

High-end AV receiver, £1,500 approx



Yamaha's new flagship receiver packs in enough features to keep even the most demanding audiophile happy. These include 11.2-channel compatibility, 8 in/2 out HDMI (V1.4a with 3D Audio Return Channel), HD audio decoding with Cinema DSP 3D, HQV video quality, a new version of Yamaha's Parametric Room Acoustic Optimizer with Reflected Sound control, a learning-capable remote and even an 'oil-damped' hidden control panel. <http://uk.yamaha.com>

New Bronze age



Monitor Audio's Bronze BX speaker range mixes the best of its BR speakers with tech from the

Platinum and RX series. The new line-up boasts all C-CAM drivers, single-bolt driver fixings, improved crossovers, HiVE reflex ports, magnetic grille attachment and four vinyl wood finishes. The range consists of the two-way BX1 (£200 pr) and BX2 (£250 pr) bookshelf speakers, BX5 (£500 pr) and BX6 (£3650 pr) floorstanders, super-compact BX-FX (£250 pr) surrounds, BX-LCR centre (£150), and the BXW-10 sub (£450). www.monitoraudio.co.uk

3D flatscreens



Sony has extended its range of 3D-ready TVs by releasing two network models, the Bravia KDL-NX713 and

NX813. The former is available in 40 and 46in sizes, while the latter is a 55in screen. By adding a 3D Sync Transmitter and Sony Active Shutter glasses you can upgrade them to 3D. Both the 'monolithic' TVs pack Bravia Internet Video for streaming ondemand content, MotionFlow picture processing (100Hz Pro on the N713, 200Hz Pro on the NX813), Dynamic Edge LED backlighting and 2.1 sound systems. www.sony.co.uk

'Any TV' spex



Monster has launched 'the first universal wireless shutter system 3D eyewear',

designed to work with all brands of 3DTV. Styled and sized to fit over glasses if necessary, the Monster Vision Max 3D spex plus a transmitter cost £165, with extra pairs of glasses costing £115. The spex use Active Sync RF tech to ensure reliable communication with the RF transmitter and allow the wi-fi Universal 3D Shutter Transmitter to monitor the signal from any 3D-enabled flatpanel, decode the shutter signals and transmit them to a sensor in the glasses. www.monstercable.com

Sony lights up 3D projection

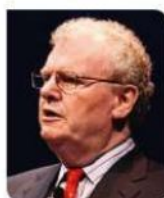
Improved SXRD is the key to a brighter picture

Previewed at the IFA show, Sony's first 3D projector, the VPL-VW90ES, is expected to set jaws dropping when it arrives in the UK in November, priced at around £6,000.

Speaking at the pre-show press conference, Sony CEO Sir Howard Stringer said: 'The 3D train is moving forward, and Sony clearly has the strongest engine in this 3D express.'

Tak Nakane, marketing manager, Sony Professional, gave *HCC* an exclusive preview of the projector's features. He explained that many of the problems of 3D were ironed out on the chipsets used for Sony's Bravia 3D LCD TVs, citing the simulation of 3D from 2D as an example. But he intimated there were still challenges involved in adapting 3D to front projection. 'There was little difficulty transferring the 3D TV chipset to the projector, but the biggest problem is that creating 3D imagery involves a drop in brightness,' he explained. 'The VPL-VW90ES is based on the VW-85, but to overcome the problem it has improved brightness of 100 ANSI lumens, with an improved contrast ratio of 150,000:1.'

The VPL-VW90ES has a 240Hz SXRD panel designed to minimise another problem of 3D, which is flicker. 'We're confident that we've reduced the possibility of



Sir Howard Stringer, CEO of Sony, claims the company is forging ahead with 3D projection plans

discomfort in viewing 3D,' said Tak, although he argued that

properly authored 3D material ought not to cause this problem in the first place.

Another improvement in the SXRD panel is that it has a reduced pixel spacing resulting in improved brightness and less of a visible 'grid' effect. Other features of the VW90E are the Advanced Iris 3 aperture system, and Bravia Engine picture processing.

Mr Nakane claims a special projection screen for use with 3D is unnecessary. 'A matt white screen with 1.3 to 1.4 gain is sufficient. LG's 3D projector requires a silver screen, but Sony's does not involve the viewer in further expense.'

Two pairs of 3D glasses will come with the projector. '3D projection requires an additional polarisation filter attached to the front of the glasses,' explains Tak, 'but this can be detached to use the glasses with a 3D TV.'

So will 3D projection have mass market appeal, or will it be limited to the high end? 'Everyone will be able to enjoy it,' says Tak, adding 'if they enjoyed the 3D experience in a cinema, I think they will want to recreate it at home.'

VPL-VW90ES: First 3D PJ announced



Playlist...

Team *HCC* reveals its Playback picks of the last month

1 High School High (R2 DVD)



Written by the Zucker Bros, madcap zingers fly with dazzling accuracy. Proof that stupid comedies can be funny! *SM*

2 Justice League: Crisis on Two Earths (R2 DVD)



This latest animated feature packs in more superhero spectacle than any live-action movie ever could. *CJ*

3 Leningrad Cowboys Go America (R2 DVD)



This hilarious Aki Kaurismäki movie about Siberia's singing sensation is worth revisiting for the giant quiffs and winklepickers. *JL*

4 In Bruges (US import All-region BD)



After visiting Philips' factory in Bruges, I just had to watch this classic comedy again. *MC*

5 Galaxy of Terror (R1 DVD)



Taken from a new hi-def remaster, this Roger Corman-produced *Alien* knock-off has never looked better. *AvB*

Demo'd!

The AV highlights of...
Psycho on Blu-ray

Distinguishing marks



14.46: The outstanding quality of the Blu-ray's remastered and restored VC-1 1.85:1 1080p encode becomes quickly apparent in shots like this close-up of the cop peering into Marion's car.

Play with the traffic



19.03: The boffins at French company Audionamix have worked wonders with this DTS-HD MA 5.1 soundscape. On the new mix simple effects like the sound of cars driving from right-to-left (and vice versa) across the frame can be followed across your front speakers.

Shower scene



46.57: *Psycho*'s famous shower sequence is a masterpiece of fast-cut imagery (90 shots taken from 70 different camera angles) working in perfect harmony with Bernard Herrmann's screeching score. And, unsurprisingly, it looks and sounds better than ever now.

Crickets unearthed



58.41: The sequence where Norman disposes of the evidence of the murder is another showcase for the encode's deep, rich blacks and excellent fine detail. And the new 5.1 mix has picked out and separated the sound of crickets, previously buried in the original mono track.

Nokia's N8 is an AV hybrid

First phone to output HD video and surround sound from HDMI

The worlds of personal media players and mobile phones have long been converging. We've seen several handheld devices over the past 18 months that attempt to combine the two functions, but at last, the first genuine media player/mobile hybrid has arrived in the shape of the remarkable Nokia N8.

This is the first mobile phone able to output HD video and multichannel surround sound via a mini-HDMI output (an adaptor is supplied in the box). It's also the first to support Dolby Digital Plus, the next generation codec which builds upon the success of Dolby Digital 5.1. All DD+ decoders are fully backwards compatible with first generation DD5.1, however, the Plus suffix means that it can deliver high-quality 5.1 within a low bandwidth, puny bitrate environment. This makes it attractive to both TV broadcasters and content owners looking to distribute high-performance files within tight space constraints.

To put Nokia's claims to the test, *HCC* was invited along to Dolby Laboratories' Wootton Bassett HQ to meet with Dolby's senior technical marketing manager Jonathan Jowitt. With the device hooked up to a regular home cinema system, we were treated to a trailer for *Tron: Legacy* and a clip from *Kung Fu Panda*, both encoded in AVC at 720p. The resulting visuals were crisp and detailed, but more impressive still were the powerful and immersive DD+ surround tracks; subjectively *Kung Fu Panda* sounded exactly the same as the standard DVD DD5.1 track, despite the significant difference in bandwidth.

'We think that clip sets a good benchmark for quality,' says Jowitt. 'If you think about most mobile TV channels, they've been a bit lacklustre.'



Jonathan Jowitt, Dolby's senior technical marketing manager, says there's a lot of 5.1 content out there to use

They've not whet the appetite of the consumer

very well, and I don't think there's been a lot of investment into the quality. You'd be hard-pushed to find a really good portable movie-based or TV-based service... iPlayer excluded, because mobile operators can't really invest as much money as they want.'

Jowitt thinks that, when it comes to full-length movies, 'the more predictable or reliable method will be sideloading from your PC or laptop'. But the music industry is excited. 'We've seen a backlash against low-bitrate MP3 from the creators. And now there is better quality,' claims Jowitt. 'Some of the big labels have opened up vaults of 5.1 content to us. Now they're seeing portable devices come onto the market with 5.1, they can see a new way of selling high-definition multichannel music.'

Future PMPs: could offer 5.1 content



Luhrmann's work



Twentieth Century Fox is bringing Baz Luhrmann's two most popular films to Blu-ray in the UK on November 1. *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* and *Moulin Rouge!* are both packed with extras (including new picture-in-picture features), but best of all, Luhrmann has personally overseen brand new hi-def transfers from the original camera negatives with the aid of esteemed digital intermediate colourist, Jan Yarborough, who previously worked on the restorations of *North by Northwest* and the all of the *Godfather* films.
www.fox.co.uk

Extra Predators



The hunt is on once again when the Robert Rodriguez-produced *Predators* comes to DVD and Blu-ray (the latter in the form of a BD/DVD/Digital Copy Triple-Play edition) on November 1 in the UK.

Confirmed extras for the high-definition version include a commentary by Rodriguez and director Nimrod Antal, plus motion comics, six *Evolution of the Species: Predators Reborn* behind-the-scenes featurettes, *The Chosen* featurette, BD-Live Live Lookup functions and nine deleted and extended scenes.
www.fox.co.uk

Frocks-away!



Are the *Sex and the City* films the height of female empowerment or a clear sign that the end of days is almost upon us? Decide for yourself when the four ladies-who-lunch of the apocalypse return to DVD and Blu-ray in the UK with *SATC 2* on November 29. Expect fabulous visuals that show off the gals' ever-changing wardrobes. The Blu-ray platter also offers a director's commentary and five featurettes: *Styling SATC 2*; *Marry Me Liza!*; *Revisiting the 80s*; *The Men of SATC* and *SATC2 Soundtrack: Behind the Scenes with Alicia Keys*.
www.warnerbros.com

A full-page background image featuring Iron Man in his iconic red and gold suit, standing in a heroic pose. Behind him, the larger, grey Iron Monger armor is visible. The scene is set against a dramatic, cloudy sky. The Iron Man suit's arc reactor and helmet visor are illuminated.

Any old Iron?

Iron Man 2 → Paramount → R2 DVD & All-region BD

Robert Downey Jr steps back into the action as high-tech superhero Iron Man on 25 October, when one of the year's hottest blockbusters makes its UK DVD and Blu-ray debut. The two-disc Blu-ray release packs in an AVC 2.35:1 1080p encode of the film with a DTS-HD Master Audio 5.1 soundtrack, plus a commentary by director Jon Favreau; SHIELD Data Vault; pre-viz and animatics; four-part *Making of...* documentary; six featurettes; eight deleted/extended scenes; concept art galleries; three theatrical trailers and an AC/DC music video, with all of the video supplements also encoded in hi-def.

Premiere

HCC's guide to what's happening in the world of TV and films...

Doctor turns wizard?

Former Doctor Who, Sylvester McCoy, is being hotly tipped for the role of wizard Radagast the Brown in the film adaptation of *The Hobbit*. It's just a shame that there's still nobody signed on to direct the film.

Titans will (re)clash



While the HCC team wasn't exactly bowled over by the recent *Clash of the Titans* remake, we're intrigued to see that Warner Bros. is fast-tracking a sequel, with *Darkness Falls* director Jonathan Liebsman behind the camera.

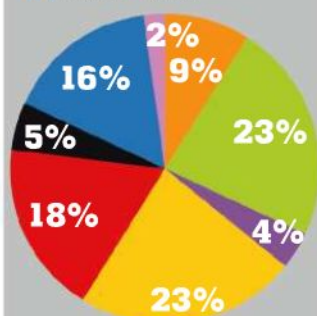
More fantastic?

With the studio eyeing up a 2012 release, it's no surprise that rumours abound regarding Fox's reboot of the *Fantastic Four* franchise. The latest include three potential directors: Joe (The A-Team) Carnahan, James (V for Vendetta) McTeigue and David (Harry Potter) Yates. Word is that Bruce Willis is being chased for the role of Ben Grimm/The Thing.

We asked...

Which of these brands makes the best AV receivers?

Arcam ■ Denon,
 Marantz ■ Onkyo
 Pioneer ■ Sony
 Yamaha ■ Other



Results from www.homecinemachoice.com
Go online for more polling action

Denon: yesterday and today

HCC exclusively talks to the man behind today's AV developments

Few AV companies can claim to have been in the business for 100 years, but that's exactly what Denon is celebrating this year.

Established in 1910, its rich company history includes selling Japan's first gramophone, and more recently, selling the first consumer CD player in the 1970s, the first home theatre system to support Dolby Digital decoding in 1995, and the world's first universal BD/DVD/CD/SACD player in 2005. So what's the secret of Denon's longevity?

Speaking exclusively to HCC from Tokyo, president of the Denon Brand Company, Hirofumi Ichikawa, claims that it's down to a combination of 'creative passion and technical brilliance'. And, he speaks from experience as the man who launched the AV receiver business in the 1980s.

'Our innovations have led to the development of entirely new product categories,' he says.

But does the recent development of portable media players that use compressed audio formats mean that Denon's vision is being degraded by consumer tastes?

'Not at all,' refutes Mr Ichikawa, continuing, 'as digital audio becomes increasingly portable, reproduction quality becomes even more important. We have to deal with new ways of listening to music and the demand for ease of use, but we see formats such as MP3 as secondary to the requirement for high quality. People are always looking for quality in sound and images and that demand will be unchanged.'

He also shared the details of



Centenary: anniversary editions go on sale in November



Hirofumi Ichikawa, president of Denon, Japan says the demand for quality is as important as ever



Denon's A100 collection, a Special Edition product

line created to celebrate the company's 100th anniversary. Due to go on sale at specially selected dealers from November 1, each of the products in the range has been finely tuned and hand-tested, and is accompanied by a signed certificate of authenticity from the chief production engineer, as a hand-crafted product

The range itself features several hi-fi components, but for home cinema buffs the two really interesting pieces are the AVR-A100 9.2-channel receiver and the matching MDP-A100 Universal Blu-ray player (priced at around £2,250 each). The former features Denon Link 4th, high-bit ip conversion and scaling, advanced connectivity, network audio/photo streaming, gold-plated inputs/outputs and cast iron footing to stabilise sound quality. It also works as an 11.2-channel preamplifier. Meanwhile, the disc-spinner features Direct Mechanical Ground Construction and Multi-layer Chassis Structure, as well as being equipped with Denon Link 4th to minimise jitter during HDMI transmission.

Zap-tastic MTX-3



The MTX-3 is Crestron's latest addition to its UK lineup of wireless touchpanel

controllers. This elegant £1,175 handset promises 'exceptional control for home theatre, automation and AV presentation', and features a fully customisable 2.8in touchscreen, large tactile buttons, electroluminescent backlighting, infiNET EX wireless performance, long battery life and Instant-Waking behaviour enabling it to 'wake' instantly at the prod of a button or touchscreen.

www.crestron.co.uk

Budget grunt



If you want to add more audio grunt to your PC or living room TV, but don't want to spend a lot,

Logitech's 2.1 speaker system might be the answer. A snip at just £150, the Z623 2.1 system has undergone over 400 acoustic and electrical bench tests to meet the THX standard (for multimedia use). It boasts 200W RMS of power and features volume and frequency controls on the right satellite speaker, plus stereo audio phono inputs and a mini-jack port, enabling you to connect the system to two separate audio sources.

www.logitech.co.uk

Hold it down



The answer to the headaches caused by the noticeable rise in TV volume levels during commercials

could be the GefenTV Auto Volume Stabilizer. Using Dolby Volume tech to keep audio consistent at all times, this neat box of tricks costs about £177 and is designed to sit between the AV source and your AVR or HDTV. Three switchable 'live' inputs/outputs are provided for both analogue (L/R) and digital (optical and coaxial) devices, and when not in use the device moves to standby mode, boosting its green credentials.

www.digi-box.co.uk

This month's top 10 news stories in handy, bite-sized chunks...



1 Face your 3D fears

Sky has been using 3D tech to try and cure arachnophobes with a creepy video of hairy tarantulas crawling out of the screen. First shown at Liverpool's BugWorld Experience last month, the film, narrated by Ralf Little, features a range of wild and domestic spiders.

2 Desmond backs Project

Richard Desmond has kicked off his new reign as owner of Channel 5 by deciding that the broadcaster will rejoin the BBC-backed internet TV service Project Canvas. Previous owner RTL had pulled out of the joint venture back in July, but Desmond is happy to be back onboard.

3 i-CAN adds sports

New brand i-CAN has added Top Up TV functions to its Easy HD Freeview HD receiver, making it the only DVB-T2 set-top box on the market that enables viewers to watch premium sports channels from both Sky and ESPN. The boxes should be on sale by the time you read this, and existing i-CAN Easy HD owners will soon be able to update their set-top boxes via a free software upgrade from the i-CAN website.

4 3D gets guidelines

THX has teamed up with Blu-ray quality assurance and advanced testing facility BluFocus, in order to offer the industry's first 3D certification program for the format. The new THX-BluFocus 3D certification will set authoring and production guidelines and testing procedures for evaluating 3D AV quality, as well as examining 3D Blu-ray disc and player interoperability and 'the physiological effects of 3D on home viewers'.

5 Universal swaps BD

Universal Pictures has launched a *Gladiator* Blu-ray disc replacement program for anybody not happy with what it calls the 'original UK purchased DVNR (digital video noise reduction) feature disc'. If that includes you, simply keep the packaging and send only Disc One with your name and address to: Universal Pictures (UK) Ltd, 'Gladiator Exchange', Prospect House, 80-110

New Oxford Street, London, WC1A 1HB. You'll receive a new non-DVNR version.

6 Discovery zipped on UK 3D

Ofcom recently granted a 3D license to Discovery Communications Europe, and while the company remains tight-lipped about a UK 3D channel, it did recently reveal that a 24hr 3D Discovery Channel would start broadcasting in the US next year.

7 Calibrate from 'over there'

Kalibrate has taken on UK distribution of US display calibration system Chromapure, which aims to make display calibration as simple as possible for the amateur or pro. The software is designed for setting up plasma, LCD or projection devices, using a variety of meters, including Datacolor Spyder and Xrite i1 types. The Chromapure programme undergoes regular updates and the next version promises

integration and automation with video processors such as Dvdo Duo and Lumagen Radiance.

8 Harmful 3D?

No matter what manufacturers say, it seems most people are still anxious about the effects of prolonged use of 3D glasses. New research from US-based Strategy Analytics

shows that of the 2,000 people surveyed, 17 per cent believed viewing 3D content to be harmful to the eyes, while another 55 per cent weren't sure.

9 Use your brains

Japanese newspaper, Yomiuri, claims that Toshiba is in the process of preparing a glasses-free 3DTV for release before the end of the year. The report claims Toshiba's tech 'emits rays of light at different angles, allowing viewers' brains to recreate 3D images without special glasses'. It also claims that this solves the narrow viewing angle issues demonstrated by previous glasses-free 3D solutions.

10 Aliens scrubs up well

In a recent interview about remastering *Aliens* for Blu-ray, James Cameron said 'we went

in and completely de-noised, de-grained it, up-rezzed it, colour corrected it end-to-end, every frame... We got rid of all the grain. It's sharper and clearer and more beautiful than it ever looked.' Can fans 'look forward to' another DNR fest like the *Predator* BD?



Web chat

What's going down on our website? This issue: *Star Wars* on Blu-ray.....



Make something new!

'Will Mr Lucas ever make anything other than *Star Wars* movies? How many times can this man keep re-hashing the franchise? To me these were classic films of my youth, now I'm just getting fed up with the endless re-releases... Stop it, George, and please move on!'

Re-hash king

'Maybe if we tattoo the words "new" and "original" on the side of a big blow-up Jabba the Hutt, he might get the hint – or we could kidnap him and tattoo "re-hash king" on his butt! We should vote which way to go...'

Cash in!

'I bet he will release the movies on Blu-ray then double dip with 3D Blu-ray a year later!'

Can't wait

'Even though I'm not a fan at all of 3D, I personally would like to see them done properly in 3D. Just think of some of the scenes! Trench run, battle on Hoth, asteroid field, attack on Death Star 2, speeder chase, etc. The problem is George may do yet more new Special Editions in 3D, ie change or enhance

some scenes. I'm just looking forward to seeing them on Blu-ray soon.'

Charity case

'If they release them on 3D Blu-ray it will probably save the whole format... Anyway, I'd rather him keep remastering the originals than make any more new ones. And apparently he gives a lot to charity – it makes me feel a little bit better about lining his pockets.'



SHE DESERVES FULL HD



The Playon!HD Full HD media player is the only device you need for home entertainment. Imagine at the touch of a button, your movie, music and photo collection, is brought to life on your TV and through your sound system, in unsurpassed Full HD viewing clarity and spine tingling 7.1 HD audio.

Get rid of the cluttered home entertainment set-up, free your media library from your PC and conveniently store your entire media library on the Playon!HD low-noise, low-power consumption eco-friendly HDD up to 2TB.

With more audio, video and photo file format support than any other player, the Playon!HD is the most highly awarded media player that you and your home entertainment deserve!

Engage your senses - Playon!

www.acryan.com | www.playonhd.com

PLAYON!HD **Store.Play.Stream in Full HD**

Full HD Network Media Player

ACR-PV73100P+ available without HDD | 500GB | 1TB | 1.5TB | 2TB



Greenlife™

The Playon! series uses only eco-friendly, low-power, low-noise operation hard drives.

Available at:

amazon.co.uk

MISCO.co.uk

PLAY.com

SCAN
www.scan.co.uk

HotMags - Free Magazines



POINT OF VIEW

Richard Stevenson turns grumpy old man in his appraisal of the dumbed down, effects-ridden offerings that are today's blockbuster movies

I have got to the age where phrases such as 'back in the day' and 'they don't make them like they used to' trip, easily, from my tongue in the course of daily conversation. I like to think this is the voice of experience and maturity, whereas the wife says it's because I am an old fart.

Unaccustomed as I am to commenting on movies rather than hardware, I recall that they made really good movies once upon a time and they don't make them like they used to. My last few months' viewing have been less than spectacular, with a recent spate of four expensive yet half-baked movies in a row. *Avatar*: special effects over content; *Alice in Wonderland*: style over content; *LoTR* Trilogy on Blu-ray: rampant publisher greed by not offering the extended cut, and finally *Clash of the Titans*: a dire shadow of the Harryhausen original. I am starting to wonder quite why I invest so much time, effort and money in home cinema when half the movie-making industry is putting out rubbish, with millions spent on special affects and just £4.35 paid for plot writing and character development.

I am absolutely convinced that the wow-factor of 3D cinema is further fuelling this dumbing down of movies, too.

Pretty much every film I have seen in 3D thus far has looked fantastic, yet has been spectacularly disappointing as a story. Amazingly, they have all been outstanding successes at the box office too! Not one will make a decent transfer to Blu-ray, 3D or otherwise. Once the public at large gets used to swords sticking out of the screen and flying insects wafting around the room, they are going to realise just how shallow and unrewarding these movies really are.

So I was really delighted to get an email from Amazon last month telling me they were having a sale of classic sci-fi movies on DVD. Priced anywhere between £2 and £4, they were offloading groundbreaking flicks such as *Logan's*

Run, *Fahrenheit 451*, *The Omega Man* and *The Andromeda Strain*. Even *West World* was available, which rates up there in my all-time top movies. I had not seen any of these films for probably 20 years; last watched on VHS ... back in the day.

I remember Yul Brynner being totally mesmerizing as a murderous, rogue cowboy robot, and I fondly recall the excellent special effects – the space-age hovercraft, the robot horses and the control room with its whirling tape reels. The film was well paced, exciting and at the cutting edge of cinematography for its day. James Brolin and Richard Benjamin gave sterling performances and, dammit, I wanted to be Yul Brynner's gunslinger (the bald head notwithstanding).

Rose-tinted memories

Some things are best left as great memories. The film now seems slow and the special effects are positively archaic. The acting is Pinocchio-class wooden and Brynner just wanders around shooting people. Even the robot horses are actually just horses. Every major premise of the movie has since been done better, and after *Terminator* no robot is going to look scary in leather pants and a Stetson. Adding insult to this injury, the film is grainy and colourless on the big screen and the sound is compressed Dolby Stereo.

So, with current movies lacking substance and oldies perhaps best left as nostalgia trips. I decided maybe it was time to hang up the remote control and take up golf.

Thankfully, while I was on Amazon browsing *Putting For Dummies*, I chanced upon *District 9* on Blu-ray. Blimey! Innovative science fiction with great characters and a unique plot – and apparently not made on enough budget to spoil the whole thing with overt special effects. Maybe I'll give the movie industry one last chance...

Are movies getting better or worse through special effects? Let us know what you think: email hcc@futurenet.com

Richard Stevenson has seen a few things in his time and thinks kids, these days, don't know when they're well off...





WELCOME HOME

THE ONE THING THE WORLD'S PREMIER MOVIE THEATRES AND CONCERT HALLS HAVE OVER SYNTHESIS® SYSTEMS? MORE SEATS.

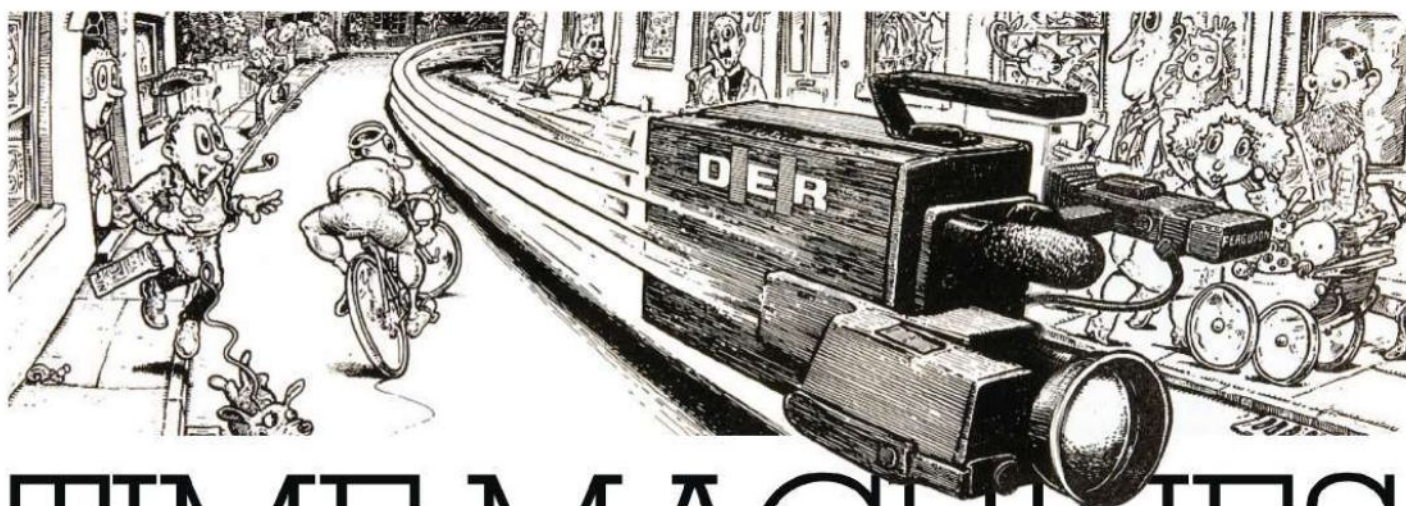
JBL Synthesis® home theatre and music systems are designed and custom-installed to duplicate the electrifying performance characteristics of acclaimed venues like the Samuel Goldwyn Theater and the Sydney Opera House, but on a somewhat more intimate scale. Industrial-grade technologies, materials and engineering, from the most applauded professional brand, deliver systems of uncompromised power and authority for the homes of purists and enthusiasts, as well as film and music professionals, everywhere. As Synthesis owners and audio reviewers alike will tell you, more impressive and realistic residential sound systems can't be found anywhere, at any price.



S Y N T H E S I S ®



01423 359054



TIME MACHINES

Martin Pipe recalls the days when consumers were more likely to rent their home entertainment from a high street shop than to own it outright

Over 30 years ago, the average home had very little electronics, apart from a TV in the lounge, a radio or two and perhaps the most-coveted item of all, the music centre. The latter item alone would have set you back around £300, at a time when the average take-home pay was less than fifty quid a week. Also selling for about the same price was a 22in colour TV set. No remote control, stereo sound or teletext here, just a column of chunky push-buttons with sufficient capacity for six channels and a 4:3 aspect ratio.

We loved our colour tellies, but to actually own one was a rarity. Rental was King. Companies such as Rediffusion, Granada and Radio Rentals had been doing very well since the flickery, monochrome 1950s, and the pinnacle of their success coincided with a massive colour TV boom in the early 1970s.

At one time, Radio Rentals boasted 500 shops, over 3,500 repair technicians and 2 million customers, and was owned by Thorn Industries. This commercial empire also owned Ferguson, a major British TV brand that supplied the bulk of Radio Rentals stock as well. Granada and Rediffusion, meanwhile, had the same parent companies as the respective ITV franchises.

The public, helped by easier credit, were deserting the rental option in favour of outright purchase from competing high street outlets such as Comet, Dixons and Laskys. Naturally, the rental companies were worried, but in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the appearance of the VCR saved their bacon. At that time, these machines were a hefty £500 or more. They were unproven in terms of reliability, added to which there were several formats to choose from.

Although the idea of home video-recording appealed, British consumers felt that renting represented the least risky option. Ferguson started selling, under the Videostar brand,

re-badged JVC VHS VCRs and these were a popular rental choice, especially in Radio Rentals outlets. Indeed, their dominance helped to end the format war; although you could rent Betamax and V2000 hardware, few did. VCRs were changing fast, newer and improved models replaced the old at an unprecedented rate, and **rental customers could update their machines at far less cost than VCR purchasers**. The rental chains disposed of their TVs and VCRs in bulk to entrepreneurs operating in out-of-town industrial estates. These warehouses would usually sell them on to independent shops that would service the equipment, before reselling it or renting it to local customers. However, some ex-rental traders would deal directly with the public, and it was in this way that the author managed to acquire his first hi-fi VCR, a Ferguson 3V43, for £150 in 1990. At far less than half the price of an inferior hi-fi machine, this VHS VCR was internally-retrofitted with a Maplin Nicam decoder shortly thereafter. And it still works. How ironic that it outlasted the major chain that was its first owner.

Long live rental!

When VHS won the format war, the price of VCRs fell considerably, so that outright purchase of VCRs, as with radios and TVs before them, became the norm. In the mid-1980s, some chains offered satellite TV equipment, but the writing was on the wall for rental. Granada rebranded as Box Clever and merged with Radio Rentals in 2000. Now the company only has a presence on the internet (www.boxclever.co.uk) offering products from the likes of Samsung, Toshiba and Philips. Given the speed with which even full HD flatscreen TVs have been rendered obsolete by 3D models, might a rental revival be overdue? ●

*Would you prefer to rent your AV kit than to own it?
Let us know: email hcc@futurenet.com*

The author **Martin Pipe** remembers watching the 1966 World Cup through the shop window of Radio Rentals in Southend





TECH TANTRUM

Barry Fox considers the various methods being proposed for broadcasting 3D telly on 2D platforms, without any visual confusion

I may well scream if yet another corporate sales dork selling 3D TV, pinches the potted history of stereoscopy from Wikipedia and recites: 'polarised screenings were all the rage in the 1950s with big screen movies like *Bwana Devil*, *House of Wax* and *Fort Ti*.' But Wiki doesn't tell the story of what happened to *Fort Ti* in 1982.

TVS, the ITV station then serving Southern England, promised full colour, 3D broadcasting from a secret new process. The *TV Times* distributed 8 million pairs of glasses, while high street retailers offered another 5 million pairs for sale. The so-called 'secret' system was based on the age-old anaglyph idea, with coloured fringes added to overlapping left and right eye images.

Viewers with the special spectacles, which put a red filter over one eye and blue over the other, got an illusion of depth and a bit of colour. But the millions of other viewers who watched *Fort Ti* cowpokes at peak viewing time just saw double. They jammed the switchboards with complaints to both TVS and the regulator (as was), the Independent Broadcasting Authority.

Since then there have been only short 3D test transmissions on terrestrial TV. Sky, a law unto itself with a shed load of satellite channels, does broadcast 3D on a dedicated channel, but only to 3D TV owners who phone up and request it.

But all that may change, and my bet is that it will do so in time for the Olympics. There are already several technical ideas for putting 3D on Freeview (and Freesat) without making 2D viewers think they've dropped acid.

Arqiva, the company that runs the UK's TV and radio transmitters, has been lab-testing a system called '2D Plus Delta' or '2D plus Difference'. Secret over-the-air tests are due soon.

Instead of using two channels to simulcast 2D and 3D versions of the same programmes, as Sky

does, Arqiva broadcasts a single 2D channel for existing Freeview 2D receivers, plus an extra narrow bandwidth channel that new Freeview 3D receivers will be able to pick up and combine with the 2D channel to make a 3D signal for a 3D TV.

In practice, the main broadcast channel will be the left eye image, and the Delta channel is the difference between left and right views, which new 3D receivers will then use to create a right eye image.

Arqiva reckons that the latest Freeview HD receivers have so much spare processing power that it may even be possible to convert them to 3D with a firmware upgrade.

Another possibility is for the extra channel to carry depth cues, like those already deployed by the 2D-to-3D converters inside Samsung and Sony TVs.

A night on the tiles...

Meanwhile Italian company, Sisvel, has promised to demonstrate something completely different at IFA in Berlin 2010. The company's '3D Tile Format' leaves the left eye image untouched, but slices the right image into several (usually three) small tiles that are pieced together around the outside of the left image like a jigsaw.

Sisvel claims that 'existing H.264 decoders, without any change of the firmware, can provide a 2D compatible picture' by extracting the central left eye tile; and existing receivers will only need 'a very simple firmware upgrade (via download) in order to be able to feed a 3D display.'

My money is on Arqiva's simpler system, which is less likely to cause problems for existing receivers. And since Arqiva runs the transmitter network, it will effectively be selling to itself ●

*Do you welcome the introduction of 3D to broadcasting?
Let us know: email hcc@futurenet.com*

Barry Fox
Will be on the Berlin airlift to IFA to view the latest technology from there. We expect his column, 'Ich bin ein Binliner' to be wired over shortly





Ticking all the boxes is just half the story

Our new RX-V667 has all the specifications and performance you'd hope for in a state of the art receiver. But add to that Yamaha's legendary Natural Sound quality plus a price tag that leaves the competition gasping, and we think you'll agree the choice comes down to one!

Discover more at uk.yamaha.com

YAMAHA RX-V667 Development Project DESIGN SPECIFICATIONS CHECKLIST

- HDMI 1.4 with 3D and Audio Return Channel
- 6 in 1 Out HDMI inc front input
- 7 channel surround sound (90W x 7)
- HD Audio decoding with Cinema DSP 3D processing
- New Graphic User Interface with Album Art
- Discrete Amp configuration
- Assignable Amplifiers
- Front Presence Speaker option
- Virtual Presence Speaker Function
- High Quality Video Processing
- Analogue and HDMI upscaling to full HD 1080p
- Motion adaptive and edge adaptive deinterlacing
- iPod/iPhone "Airwired" Wireless Dock Option
- Compressed Music Enhancer with Cinema DSP
- Versatile Zone Control
- Pure Direct
- Low Jitter PLL circuitry
- YPAD automatic speaker set-up
- Suggested Retail Price £450

APPROVED



Also available in black



October 2010



Powered by music

Tech diary

The world of AV and film changes fast. **Our calendar** means you don't miss out on any of the excitement

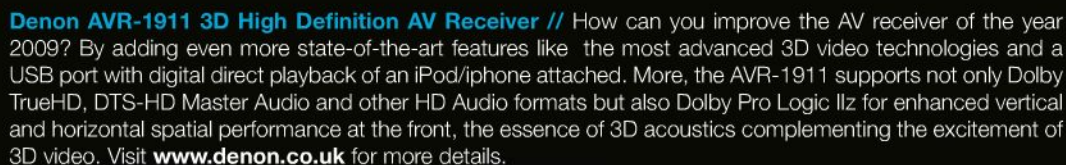
Fanboys:
Buddy movie
that's a
Phantom
Menace fest



Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
				24 Frozen Having made a killing on the festival circuit, writer-director Adam Green's chilly thriller about three skiers trapped overnight on a chairlift makes it to UK cinemas. www.frozen-film.com		
				1 Buried Due in cinemas today is this claustrophobic thriller about a US contractor in Iraq who gets buried alive in a coffin with just a lighter and mobile. http://experienceburied.com		
4 Fanboys Today marks the UK DVD and Blu-ray release of this love letter to <i>Star Wars</i> fandom, following a group of friends on a road trip to steal an early copy of <i>Star Wars: Episode One</i> . www.fanboys-themovie.com	5 Connected Home Global Summit 2010 This 2-day event at the London Heathrow Marriott Hotel aims to explore the impact of converged digital devices and the evolution of broadband access on the connected home. www.avrevents.com	6 ehome 2010 Running in conjunction with the 3-day electrical products expo, belectro 2010 at Germany's Messe Berlin, this international trade show will be exploring every aspect of networking in homes and commercial buildings. www.ehome-berlin.de	8 Mr Nice Bernard 'Candyman' Rose helms this big screen adaptation of drug smuggler Howard Marks' autobiography. Rhys Ifans plays the man himself. At UK cinemas from today. www.eentertainmentuk.com	9 Happy birthday! Fashion model, turned actor, Brandon Routh, is 31 today. Despite numerous roles on TV and film in recent years, he's best known for playing the iconic superhero in Bryan Singer's <i>Superman Returns</i> .	10 R.I.P Actor, director, producer, screenwriter, author and spinal injury activist, Christopher Reeve, died of a cardiac arrest on this date in 2004. He is best remembered as Superman in the four movies made between 1978 and 1987.	
11 The Exorcist One of the scariest films ever made makes the jump to hi-def today with the UK Blu-ray release of <i>The Exorcist</i> . The 2-disc set includes both cuts of the film plus new featurettes. http://theexorcist.warnerbros.com		13 BFI London Film Festival The UK's biggest film festival celebrates its 54th year with hundreds of screenings over 15 days, starting with the European premiere of Mark Romanek's <i>Never Let Me Go</i> . www.bfi.org.uk/lff	16 Retro cinema Roundhay Garden Scene, the earliest surviving motion picture was shot on this day in 1888. The British short directed by inventor Louis Le Prince features four people walking around a garden and lasts for just under two seconds.	17 Despicable Me Steve Carell leads the all-star voice cast in this CG-animated comedy about a criminal mastermind who meets his match in the form of three orphaned girls. Opens today in the UK. www.despicableme.com	18 Manchester Sound & Vision Show 2010 This weekend-long exhibition at the Renaissance Hotel will be showcasing new products from the likes of Sony, Sim2, Velodyne, Anthem and Philips. www.manchestershow.co.uk	19 Untouchable? On this day in 1931 notorious gangster Al Capone was sentenced to 11 years in prison for tax evasion. Mark the day by watching federal agent Elliot Ness' hunt for Capone in <i>The Untouchables</i> .
18 The Rocky Horror Picture Show The definitive cult film makes its Blu-ray debut in the UK today, sourced from a new 4K/2K master with DTS-HD MA 7.1 audio and a plethora of juicy new extras. www.rockyhorror.com			23 HCC #188 Start saving your pennies. Your favourite home cinema magazine hits the stands this Thursday, packed to the gills with hardware tests, features, outspoken opinion and full-on software reviews. www.homecinemachoice.com			

www.denon100.com



The sound of success.
In 3D



Also look out for:



3D

Made for
 iPod  iPhone

Denon is a trademark or registered trademark of D&M Holdings, Inc. "Made for iPod," and "Made for iPhone," mean that an electronic accessory has been designed to connect specifically to iPod, or iPhone, respectively, and has been certified by the developer to meet Apple performance standards. Apple is not responsible for the operation of this device or its compliance with safety and regulatory standards.

John Archer guides you through the diverse and often confusing world of home cinema projection screens

Taking home cinema to the max

At HCC, we talk a lot about projectors, and not much about projector screens. But this doesn't mean we don't find screens as interesting, or consider them less important to the home cinema experience. Far from it.

One reason we don't review more screens is a practical one; installing and handling such large and cumbersome items can be a nightmare. But the other reason is that the screen market is so diverse, and associated so closely with the specific needs and room conditions of each user, that reviewing individual screens would seem too specific to be worthwhile.

The fact is, though, that if you get the screen wrong, then you will be selling your projector short, no matter how expensive it might have been.

Which type should I choose?

Start off by looking at the different types of mounting options available. There are two main approaches: fixed frame, where the screen is placed in a rigid frame and attached permanently to the wall, or 'roll-away', where it can be rolled up when not in use. Within the latter category

there are also various sub-options we'll consider in a moment.

For people lucky enough to have dedicated home cinema rooms, the fixed frame approach will often be the simplest, since the screen doesn't need to be hidden when not in use. It's widely considered, too, that permanent screens stay more tautly stretched and thus produce more accurate pictures.

Roll-away screens are obviously a great solution for people trying to accommodate a home cinema setup in a room that also gets used for other activities, such as a living room. The most basic of these screens sit on a roller attached to, or hidden in, the ceiling and the user has to manually pull the screen down when needed.

Also very popular is the motorised roll-down variety, where motors drive the screen down into position at the touch of a remote control button. Some projectors carry 12V trigger outputs, in fact, so that they can activate motorised screens automatically when the projector is switched on.

If even having a slim roll-out screen housed on your ceiling feels too

Keep it tight: permanently-fixed screens eliminate concerns about tautness

Down and out: a motorised drop-down screen can be controlled using the 12V trigger on many projectors





intrusive, a further, portable option is the pull-up projection panel. These come fixed inside carry cases that you stand on the floor, so that the screen pulls out of the top and is held upright by a collapsible support frame.

We've found that the more affordable floor-mounted types may not always stand completely upright or even flat. But the fact that you can put them in a cupboard when you're not using them is a practical benefit that will justify the performance compromises for some.

Rigidity and perfect flatness, so crucial to a good picture, are often one of the main reasons some projector screens cost vastly more than others, especially in the roll-away department.

Another key decision is which shape and size of screen you should go for. In terms of shape, there >

Pull and play: pull-out screens can be easily stored out of sight when not in use

Wonder walls?

D-I-Y pitfalls: think before you paint

We know that a lot of people who own projectors don't actually bother with a screen at all. They just point them at a wall and leave it at that.

HCC would never recommend this method, as it will inevitably prevent you from getting anything like the maximum performance from even the most miserably specified projector. Especially if your wall, like so many are, isn't completely true. But if you really don't want to cough up for a screen, here are a few pointers to bear in mind.

First, contrary to what you probably imagine, using plain white wall paint is not a good idea as they tend to severely compromise contrast performance, while reducing colour saturation. So we'd advise using a light grey colour.

Choosing whether to use a matt or gloss finish isn't as straightforward a decision as you might imagine, either. Matt walls can produce a more 'neutral' picture, but can reduce brightness dramatically. Gloss and semi-gloss walls can boost brightness, but due to the unfocused nature of the reflections, can cause annoying amounts of ambient light, as well as highlighting even the slightest imperfections in the wall you're using. And believe us when we say, there's nothing more irksome than being able to see a slight bump, ridge or crack in your wall when watching a film.

If you still want to go the painted wall route, one thing worth investigating is Screen Goo: a highly reflective acrylic 'liquid screen' formulated to reflect and disperse the complex coloured light patterns of video projectors more accurately. The system comprises a special base coat for reflectivity, with a diffusive, colour-correcting topcoat.

You can even get a variety of 'finishes', such as Ultra Black and the apparently 3D-friendly Ultra Silver 3D Topcoat.

Screen Goo 'kits' start at £175.66, which gets you 1000ml base and top coats, a tray, a 2in x 9.5m roll of black Flok tape, two rollers, and one roll handle.

are three aspect ratio options: 4:3, 16:9, and 21:9. For home cinema enthusiasts, the old 'square' 4:3 screen approach is almost certainly a nonstarter these days. Which leaves us with 16:9 or 21:9.

If you intend to watch a lot of HD, you will probably be best off with a 16:9 screen that matches the ratio of HDTV material. **If you're a die-hard movie fan, though, you might consider a 21:9/2.35:1 CinemaScope screen.** After all, most big films now are shot in 2.35:1, and so the majority of Blu-rays are produced with that aspect ratio.

However, the situation isn't totally cut and dried. Blu-rays don't currently hold 'true' 21:9 masters (instead adding black bars within the picture data), and projectors don't have true 21:9 pixel ratios. So if you want a full 21:9 experience, you need a projector with a CinemaScope lens attachment – something which can add considerable cost to your projector setup.

If you really want the ultimate in Cinemascope clarity you could consider a curved screen like Stewart's CineCurve (www.anders-kern.co.uk). These give a more immersive effect, focus light at your viewing position and compensate for the lens distortion you get with anamorphic lenses.

It's curtains for you

The existence of multiple aspect ratios explains another popular option: masking, where absorbent material can cover parts of the screen to change the shape of the visible section. On a basic level, this can be done manually using curtains, although it is quite a faff.

You can also install a motorised curtaining system external to the screen. But by far the most elegant solutions are high-end fixed screens that have motorised masking, where black borders of absorbent material can be electronically moved out from all four edges of the screen. Such screens usually ship with preset aspect ratios

and are selectable using single remote control buttons, but you can usually manually tweak the border locations yourself too.

To be really effective, the movable borders on these sorts of projection panels need to absorb light extremely well. And such screens are generally hugely expensive because of both the motors and tracking mechanisms involved. But they're generally an excellent proposition when built well enough, especially if you regularly watch 21:9 material, but don't want a CinemaScope lens or 21:9 screen.

Is it rocket science?

Choosing the correct size is more complicated than you might think. Aside from the size of your wall you need to consider at what distance from the screen your audience will sit, which is down to personal preference. When people go to the movies some like to be relatively near the front, others prefer the back, while some will only sit the middle. And so it is at home, where people like to have different screen sizes relative to their preferred viewing position.

Screen size also depends to some extent on the quality of your projector and screen. If neither is particularly good, sitting too close will only make you more aware of the shortcomings.

Finally, it's a simple fact that **how large a screen your projector can drive is dependent on the amount of brightness its lamp can produce.** So while 'light cannons' such as Sim2's spectacular C3X Lumis can drive screens many hundreds of inches across, you might find relatively low-brightness projectors struggling to keep images looking punchy over 80-100in.

We mentioned screen material earlier and it's this aspect of screen selection that's the most bewildering yet, potentially, crucial. The first decision you need to make is quite simple: do you



A bright idea: one factor determining the size of your screen should be the brightness of the projector's lamp

want to mount any speakers behind the screen? If so, you'll need an acoustically transparent, perforated fabric that enables sound to pass through without becoming muffled or blocked. Such fabric can cause problems with reduced brightness and back wall light reflections, as light passes through the acoustic holes.

No pain, no gain

After this basic decision, though, life gets more complicated. For a start, you have to get grips with the concept of gain. Some screens are high gain, while others are low, with all sorts of ratings in between, and each gain value has its place. Many white home cinema screens tend to be low gain, with values written as 1.0-1.3.

These gain figures, rather archaically, describe the ratio of light a screen reflects in relation to the amount of light that gets reflected by an untreated magnesium oxide board. So a 1.3 gain screen will reflect around 30 per cent more light than our lovely magnesium oxide white board.

The growing interest in black-level boosting screens that use a grey material rather than white is resulting in gain figures below 1.0 appearing, too.

The question of whether you should get a high or low-gain screen, again boils down to matters of taste and, more importantly, room setup. For instance, **high-gain screens have reduced viewing angles versus low-gain ones, which could be an issue if viewers will have to sit to the side of the screen.** High-gain screens can suffer from hot spots too, where the centre of the image looks brighter than the rest. And finally, high-gain projection panels can damage colour balance, since they don't reflect red, green and blue equally from all viewing angles.

But before you discount them, if there's often a degree of ambient light in your movie room, the high-gain variety could be essential. In fact, a few have been developed now with extreme gain properties, specifically to try and emulate (for a fraction of the cost) the performance of, say, a massive (80in plus) plasma screen in a normal living room environment. A particularly outstanding example of this is the Screen Innovations Black Diamond II (www.anthemavs.co.uk) we tested in issue 183.

Dedicated, blacked out home cinema rooms might be better with more standard-gain screens, though, and possibly even a grey sub-1.0 gain screen. Grey screens were extremely worthwhile a few years ago before projectors started to produce impressive contrasts, but they arguably still have a place even if you've got a good high-contrast projector. If your viewing room is either decorated in light coloured finishes or else houses numerous light furnishings, the way grey screens stop light bouncing around a room could prove very useful.

One final consideration is the issue of the



Follow the curve: for the ultimate 21:9 experience a curved screen cannot be beaten



quality, finish and weave of the screen you buy. We've heard various cynics suggest that expensive screen materials don't really make a difference. But this is just plain wrong. We've seen first-hand how some screens really can produce sharper, more detailed images with HD

than others. Also, some screens can cause a slight moiré effect over areas of fine detail while others don't.

Some screens, as previously discussed, are brighter and more reflective than others, and some are better at reproducing a convincing black colour. Some diffuse light right around your room for wide viewing angles, while others focus it right back at you. Some reproduce colours completely neutrally (and thus accurately), others can introduce an underlying tinge of their own or favour certain tones over others, leading to an unbalanced colour palette.

We're even starting to see screens appearing now that claim to be better for 3D than others. This might seem spurious at first glance, but actually stereoscopic pictures need utter clarity for high levels of detail and really accurate colour toning to become convincing, so we can understand some screens working better with the technology than others. One of the first screens designed and tested with 3D in mind is Image Screen's Cadre 3D (www.image-screens.co.uk).

Finally, the basic quality of the fabric in terms of wear and tear, hanging weight and resilience to rolling, with roll-away projectors, can have a massive impact on long-term viewing.

You would be well advised to get help from custom installation experts before finally settling on a screen. And try to partner your projector with a screen of as much quality as you can afford. After all, unlike a TV, a high quality screen should last you a lifetime ●

Fade to grey (left): off-white screens are effective in light coloured rooms

Masked ball stunner

Image Screens' iMasque becomes **John Archer's** flexible friend

IMasque from Image Screens is handmade to order and can be made to accommodate almost any customer requirement, be it size (up to 12m), screen fabric, gain, masking configuration, 'native' aspect ratio, or even the finish of the framework.

My test frame featured the standard black velvet finish, but other options include a Swarovski design, piano black or completely custom designs (with all RAL colours supported).

The screen material fitted is Image Screen's Nivo Black – a premium fabric that offers a 1.2 gain from the matt-white surface, with a black-coated rear layer to stop any light bouncing off the wall behind it. Typical pricing for a four-way masking Nivo Black iMasque screen is £16,500.

Seven veils

Seven other fabric systems are available. Vevo provides acoustic transparency, in white, grey or black-backed configurations. There's also a grey version of the Nivo, a rear projection option, and finally the Vilo white and grey options, which lose the Nivo's black backing.

As its name suggests, the iMasque features built-in remote controlled motorised masking. This can be two-way, with your choice of horizontal or vertical masking, or four-way, as per our test screen, where you can mask images vertically or horizontally at will.

The frame is made from an extruded aluminium profile, with all motors and cabling pre-installed. What's more, Image Screens has attempted to minimise maintenance issues by designing a unique bi-directional motor control system, to reduce the screen's moving parts.

The remote control offers five different aspect

ratio presets, or can adjust the vertical and horizontal masks manually. The screen can be integrated into RS232 and LAN-based systems.

Partnered with a variety of projectors, including a SIM2 MICO 50, JVC HD550 and Epson TW5500, the iMasque proved stunningly good.

Particularly gorgeous, compared with the more mainstream screens I usually see, was the colour tone. **The iMasque's Nivo fabric produced the most wonderfully neutral colour reproduction I've ever witnessed in my test room.** 'Neutral' might sound boring in other areas of life, but for movies it's the Holy Grail, because it means you're seeing colours exactly as they're supposed to look.

The outstanding colour neutrality also helped colours look more expressive, meaning I could see tonal subtleties I hadn't noticed before.

The chunky black border provided a great defined 'home' for pictures, as well as reducing unwanted 'scattergun' reflections (although these weren't much of a problem anyway, thanks to the fabric's reflective properties and uniformity). I saw no evidence of a hot spot, either, and found the image holding up easily, even from wide angles.

The motorised masking was almost spookily effective during my tests, the only caveat being that the material used looks a fraction lighter than the black frame when running a relatively poor, over-bright projector. This issue all but evaporates, though, using the sort of high-quality projector such a screen will surely be partnered with, leaving you with a wonderfully engineered marvel that seems to love films as much as you do ●

Border control: the screen's wide frame enhances the image by reducing reflections

→ Specifications

Gain: 1.2 (tested) but many other options available, including greys **Mounting options:** Fixed frame **Max size without seam:** 500in diagonal **Also featuring:** Four-way motorised masking, bi-directional motor system, extruded aluminium frame, remote control operation with five predefined aspect ratios or manual adjustment, LAN/RS-232 system control support

HCC VERDICT

Image Screens iMasque
From £8,600 Approx

Highs: Outstanding colour reproduction, contrast and brightness balance; build quality; masking technology
Lows: Masking borders don't absorb all the light from low-contrast projectors; the Nivo Black screen tested here is hardly cheap

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

a class above

With the same innovations as KEF's revolutionary Concept Blade technology showcase, the all-new Q Series from KEF performs like speakers from a higher price class in terms of realism, musicality and off-axis dispersion.

Q Series

All new Uni-Q array.

Sweet, spacious and true, wherever you sit

A large vented tweeter in the centre of the bass/midrange driver, with a 'tangerine' waveguide and unique Z-flex surround to combine unrivalled dispersion with generous travel for the aluminium MF/LF cone.

Advanced bass technologies.

Deeper, tighter and more accurate bass

Inside the fashionably rectilinear cabinets, the new bass driver combines a rigid superlight cone with a massive vented magnet assembly and an oversized voice coil for exceptional sensitivity and distortion-free power handling.

Total system design.

A holistic approach, with no compromises.

These advanced new drivers only need first order crossovers, maximising fluency and transparency, and KEF's legendary attention to detail extends from innovations for easier bi-wiring to environment-friendly finishes.



As Philips enters the 3D arena with a new-look Cinema 21:9 TV and 9000 series LEDs, Mark Craven enjoys an exclusive hands-on with the screens

3D adds another level to 21:9 TV



At the recent IFA technology expo in Berlin, Philips unveiled the second generation of its groundbreaking 21:9 TV and a new range of 9000 series screens, all sporting 3D. However, a week before the world's journalists clapped eyes on the products, HCC enjoyed an exclusive preview, getting up close and personal to the TVs before they were packed up and shipped to the show. What became clear from our briefing was that, while Philips may have come late to the 3D party, it still has the technology to make quite an entrance.



black affair, has been slimmed down and given a brushed matt finish. The low slung speakers have been hidden away, too. Finally, this is a premium product with a premium design to match.

The improvements are, of course, more than skin deep. 2010's 21:9 uses a full array of locally dimmable LEDs to illuminate its panel, where the original was a CCFL device. And then there's the big change: this new screen is 3D-ready.

In use, Philips extended R&D seems to have paid dividends. The Direct LED backlight gives 3D images a good level of brightness, something close to Tack's heart. 'If you don't have light, you can't make a good picture,' he tells me. Crosstalk, too, is reduced, thanks to the localised dimming of the 21:9's multiple LEDs and the 400Hz panel. The backlight is controlled to only illuminate areas of the picture where the pixels have settled. That's the theory anyway; during a run through of a *Toy Story 3* sequence, crosstalk was still apparent. On the other hand, the combination of the 21:9 ratio screen, four-sided Ambilight and Full HD 3D material proves so captivating that you might not even notice.

For many, finding out that the Netherlands' biggest AV brand conducts its R&D in Belgium would come as a shock. But in a squat, drab building in the industrial north of Bruges, its engineers beaver away on new display technology before the screens are assembled elsewhere.

Heading up this operation is Danny Tack, Philips enthusiastic, effervescent technical director. Tack is more than eager to show off the new 2010 range of 3D screens, confident that his brand has outperformed the competition in what is a rapidly developing market.

What's new and different?

Last year's 21:9 TV was a truly innovative product, and stole the Best TV 52in and Over category at the HCC awards. What is immediately apparent is that the second-generation version is much better.

Firstly, it's bigger (a 58in screen rather than a 56in) and benefits from a far more considered design. The bezel, previously quite a thick gloss

Life saving spex

The second-gen 21:9 will sell for around £4,000, with integrated 3D signal emitter and two pairs of glasses. The latter are made in consultation with Xpand. Lightweight and reasonably comfortable (we'd need to spend longer with them to see if they become tiring), their neat touch lies in the fact that there's no on/off button. Instead, the spex take their cue from the TV; they spring into

Feel the width: Philips has increased the size of its Cinema 21:9 screen and improved the design

In Bruges: At Philips' R & D centre (left) Danny Tack (centre) sports Xpand-designed 3D specs as he compares Philips' with rivals models from the likes of Sony, Samsung and LG (right)



30 PHILIPS' LATEST TVs

Tech talk: Vivid mode (left) is the public's favourite; nearly 1,800 LEDs are locally dimmable (centre); Philips is an EISA favourite (right)



life when a 3D signal is active and shut down when the signal stops. This should reduce battery drain on the quoted 270-hour life.

Philips' 3D screens at present eschew any 2D-3D conversion wizardry, something that is becoming a hot topic, especially with Panasonic's recent announcement that it is introducing conversion to its US 3D plasmas. Tack knows this could be an issue: 'Not to have it is a danger – it's a good tick mark. Next year we will do it, but it has to be good quality.'

Another omission from Philips' 21:9 and all its new 2010 panels, is their lack of Freeview HD tuners. **At a time when all its major rivals are packing DVB-T2 chips in their flatpanels, the Philips range remains resolutely SD** where broadcast TV is concerned. However, according to Tina Withington, Philips UK PR manager, this isn't due to any hold up in the supply chain: 'We simply underestimated the take off of Freeview HD in the UK.' Withington doubts whether many consumers really need integrated Freeview HD, pointing to the vast numbers who already have an HD broadcast source. Certainly, at the higher end of the range, we can see her point. Any buyer of the 21:9 or 9000 series would probably already be a subscriber to Sky or Virgin Media. However, at the other end of the spectrum, where Freeview HD has quickly become a major selling point, Philips' TVs may struggle. Chips will be integrated across the range in 2011, however.

The 21:9 represents the pinnacle of Philips' TV range, but the regularly-shaped 9000 Series will also turn heads this year. Alongside being 3D

ready (Philips is adopting the external transmitter/glasses bundle approach for these screens) it boasts the new top-of-the-range Perfect Pixel HD processing engine, 400Hz technology, 1,792 LEDs in 224 segments for local dimming, ISF calibration and a claimed 10,000,000:1 contrast ratio and 0.5ms response time.

Deep inside Philips' Centre of Competence, Danny Tack gave a variety of demos with the 9000 series. He compared his flagship TV with rival models from Samsung, Sharp, LG and Sony (with the latter screen, an 803 model, only arriving at the factory the day before). Interestingly, the demos were conducted with the screens' vivid/dynamic modes and frame rate enhancement tech activated. This is because vivid mode, according to Philips' research, is the one consumers prefer (but certainly not us).

With his range of TVs, Tack showed off the pure processing power of the 9000 series, delivering images and videos that seemed sharper, punchier and better contrasted than its rivals. However, they all looked exaggerated to some degree.

When it comes to artificially tweaking colours, sharpness and frame rates, we have yet to be convinced of the benefit from a home cinema point of view.

A good example of this is what Tack refers to as Philips 'halo-free' Perfect Natural Motion technology. With all the screens running at their highest frame rate modes, he showed how haloing (which occurs when a fast-moving object crosses in front of a detailed background and the processing engine struggles to accurately create the detail in the artificial additional frames) blights all brands. The 9000 was the least affected by artifacting, but it was still noticeable – halo-free doesn't quite live up to its name. Switch off Perfect Natural Motion, though, and the artifacting disappears, only to be replaced by judder. The choice is yours.

Going Dutch

By the time you read this, the IFA show will have come and gone, and we reckon Philips will have made quite an impression. The technological advances of the new-look 21:9 easily make it one of the most desirable flatscreens around and certainly up there with Samsung's 9000 series flagship. The super-charged 16:9 ratio LED TVs, too, appear ready to do battle with their counterparts in the growing 3D sector. The summer months may have belonged to the Japanese and Korean brands, but this winter could be all about Philips ●

See the light: The reinvented Cinema 21:9 screen will be complemented by the new 9000 series of 3D Ambilight screens



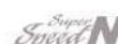


ASUS
Inspiring Innovation • Persistent Perfection

Home Entertainment: Just O!Play It

Play movies, music and photos from your home network.

With the O!Play not only can you play movies, music and photos from your home network, but also browse over 100 internet TV channels, 20,000 internet radio stations, internet photo sharing sites, and get weather updates directly to your TV.



Supported formats: MPEG1/2/4, RM/RMVB, VC-1, H.264, MP4, MOV, XVID, AVI, DIVX, ASF, WMV, MKV, RM, RMVB, FLV, TS, M2TS, DAT, MPG, VOB, ISO, MP3, WAV, AAC, OGG, FLAC, AIFF, JPEG, BMP, PNG, GIF, TIFF, SRT, SUB, SMI, SSA

• non-wireless version is available



Built-in card reader for easy file sharing



"the great things about the O!Play - it's ability to play HD Content without stalling, HDMI interface, sleek aesthetics and easy to use software interface."

- Overclock3d.net Recommended



"it's support of DVD menus makes it a good choice if your on a budget."

- Computer Shopper BUDGET BUY

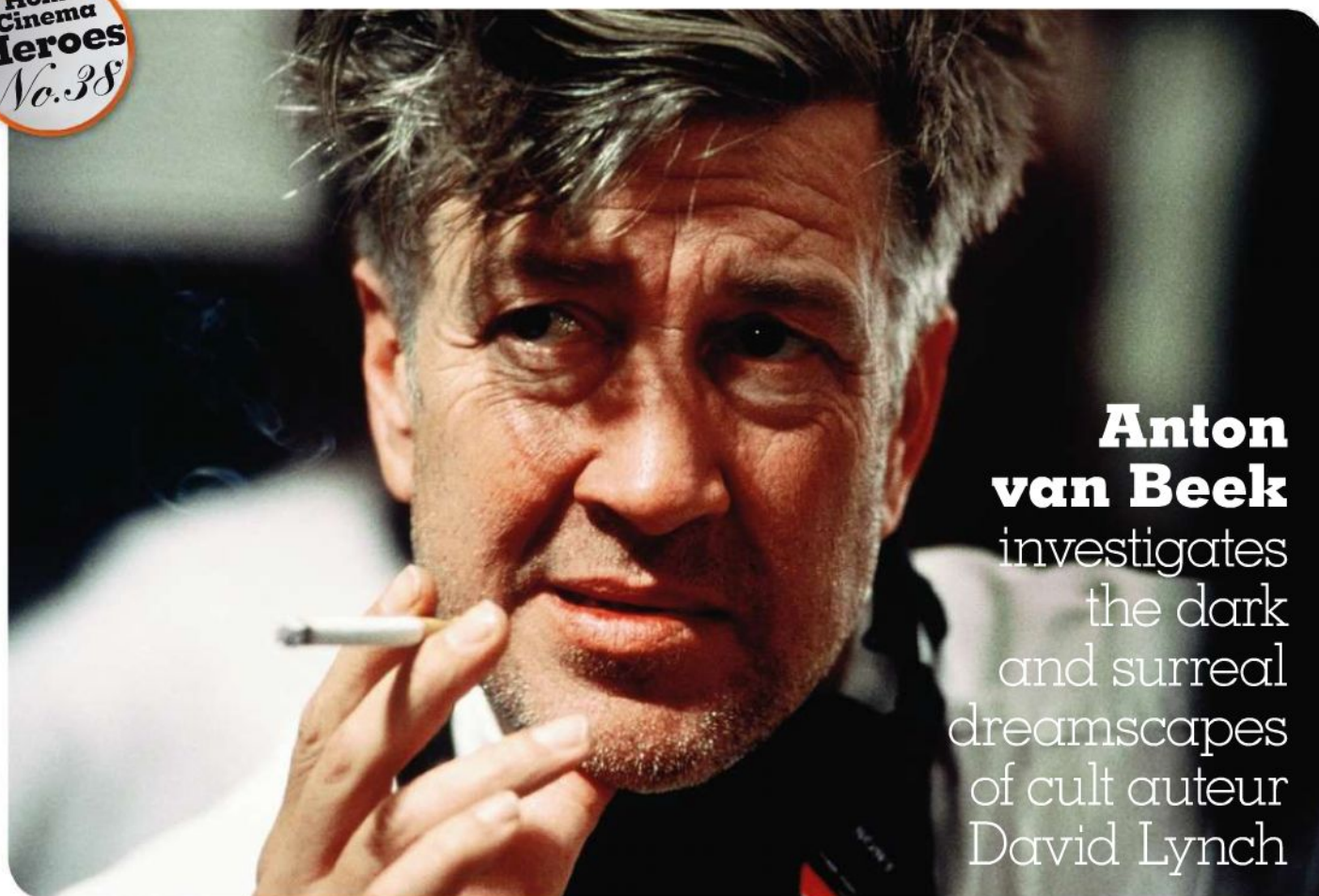
O!PLAY AIR
HD MEDIA PLAYER

amazon.co.uk

ariaPC
TECHNOLOGY

dabs.com

SCAN



Anton van Beek
investigates
the dark
and surreal
dreamscapes
of cult auteur
David Lynch

Small-town weird

FBI Special:

Cool-cut Agent Dale waits for another slice of cherry pie



Cult filmmaker David Lynch once claimed that 'all my movies are about strange worlds that you can't go into, unless you build them and film them. That's what's so important about film to me. I just like going into strange worlds'. And, as anybody who has ever seen any of his extraordinary work will know, he wasn't joking when he talked about alien worlds. While the realities he creates may seem like familiar places we know, before long they become more threatening and nightmarish: a twisted reflection of the world in which we spend our waking lives. And to think, this comes from a man who George Lucas once approached to direct *Return of the Jedi*.

But even if he has never gone entirely 'mainstream', Lynch has often managed to straddle the line between entertainment and art with uncanny ease. Just look at *Blue Velvet*; an early critical and commercial success that established the director's fascination with exploring the dark underbelly of small-town America, is loaded with all of the twisted sex and violence that would also become his trademark.

And then there's the early '90s TV series *Twin Peaks*, which successfully did much the same

thing as a weekly series and was extremely popular (at least up until the point where the network demanded that Lynch reveal the identity of Laura Palmer's killer).

Since then his films have become even more experimental, with the likes of *Mulholland Drive* (reviewed on p92) and *Inland Empire* offering no easy answers to the confused logic of their narratives, and challenging audiences to bring their own meanings to what they are watching. Which is where having them available to re-watch on DVD and Blu-ray comes in so handy.

Craft work

And while he doesn't really care for commentaries or other extra features, Lynch is every bit as meticulous when overseeing the production of a DVD release of his work as he is in actually crafting the films they contain.

From extensively remastered transfers (check out the *Twin Peaks* Gold Box DVD set for a prime example) to astonishing audio mixes, Lynch's discs always manage to coax the very best out of your AV system – which in our eyes is more than enough to justify Lynch a place in the Home Cinema Hero gallery ●

Quintessential David Lynch... Agent Cooper visits the Red Lodge



1 Peak dreamscapes

With its dancing dwarf and 'reverse-speak', this dream sequence from *Twin Peaks* is classic.



2 Red or dead?

An ageing Agent Dale Cooper sits in a red room, while a dwarf in a sharp suit gives him esoteric clues.



3 Doppelgänger

Introducing his cousin with, 'doesn't she look just like Laura Palmer?', the dwarf then gets up to have a dance.



4 The truth is out there

Not-Laura then goes over to Cooper, kisses him on the lips and whispers the identity of Laura's killer.

Must own...



Eraserhead

Scanbox → R2 DVD
£20 Approx

Initially deemed unreleasable by prospective distributors, Lynch's debut feature became a cult hit due to its nightmarish visuals and enigmatic storyline. Mystery still surrounds exactly how Lynch created the mutant baby.

00.09: The film's tone is established from the outset with the ominous industrial noise, which the DVD's 48kHz stereo mix handles extremely well.

47.25: A woman with deformed cheeks shuffles across a stage squashing giant sperm under her feet.



Blue Velvet

Sanctuary → R2 DVD
£10 Approx

The filmmaker began his investigation into the seedy underside of small-town America with this chilling descent into madness and murder.

36.13: Having been discovered spying on Dorothy from her closet, Jeffrey's night gets even weirder when she then seduces him, only to be interrupted by the arrival of the terrifying Frank.

102.59: A final visit to her apartment reveals one of the oddest double-murder scenes you'll ever see, plus a superbly timed shock.



The Elephant Man

Studio Canal Collection → Region A/B BD £25 Approx

Any notion that Lynch couldn't handle emotional content is quickly scuppered by this sensational biopic of so-called Victorian 'human curiosity', Joseph Merrick. You'd need a heart of stone not to be in tears by the end.

39.22: The touching scene where Treves encourages Merrick to break his silence also gives you a great chance to study the astonishing makeup effects.

74.12: Well, it wouldn't be a David Lynch film without at least one nightmarish dream sequence.



Lost Highway

Zentertain Ltd → R2 DVD Special Edition → £20 Approx

A saxophonist is accused of killing his wife; he goes to prison and undergoes a transformation; on his release he starts a relationship with a mobster's mistress who looks just like his dead wife. Really weird and mind-bendingly brilliant.

46.48: The protagonist's change is signified by a thunderous gear shift in the score that assaults the viewer from all corners of the 5.1 soundscape.

60.52: Gangster, Mr Eddy, shows us what he thinks about drivers who tailgate other cars.

Worth seeing...



Wild at Heart

MGM → R1 DVD Special Edition
£9 Approx (US Import)

Based on Barry Gifford's pulp novel, Lynch's twisted road movie is heavy on off-kilter violence and allusions to *The Wizard of Oz*.

03.09: Sailor (Cage) works out some anger issues on the man Lula's (Derr's) mother sent to kill him. Unsurprisingly, the results aren't very pretty.

105.02: Sailor ends up betrayed and with a dud gun during the hold-up, but it's the man responsible, Bobby Peru, who really loses his head during the ensuing shoot-out with the police.



Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me

Zentertain Ltd → R2 DVD
£10 Approx

This cinematic prequel to the TV series tells the story of the last seven days in the life of Laura Palmer. While the subject matter is horrifying and the visuals virtually assault the viewer, the tone is surprisingly compassionate.

02.28: Tonally different from the TV series, as signified by this opening shot of a TV being smashed with a baseball bat as a woman screams.

72.37: The notorious Pink Room scene on this release is optionally subtitled.



The Straight Story

4DVD → R2 DVD
£16 Approx

Lynch ended the last millennium with this family-friendly true story about an old man's six-week journey across the US on a John Deere Lawn Tractor, in order to visit his estranged brother. The only one of his films that Lynch had no hand in writing.

25.48: The anamorphic 2.35:1 transfer really shines, courtesy of this series of stunning rural American landscapes.

58.45: Things get a little too hairy for Alvin when he loses control of his mower on a steep hill.



Dune

Sanctuary → R2 DVD Special Edition
£20 Approx

Lynch accepted an offer from Dino De Laurentiis to helm a blockbuster adaptation of Frank Herbert's sci-fi epic. The film is all over the place and Lynch quickly distanced himself from it.

06.36: The story may be incoherent, but the production design and excellent FX (like this Guild Navigator) ensure that it at least looks spectacular.

97.19: To prove he is ready to lead the Fremen, Paul heads out to the deserts of Arrakis to conquer a massive sandworm. As you do.

It's a family affair



A technically challenging fit-out results in a basement screening room the whole family can use. **Anton van Beek** reports



Kit Checklist

Runco: VX-300d Ultra 1080p DLP projector with Cinewide Rainier 1
Screen Research: THX-certified TheaterCurve Xmask 2.35:1 fixed frame projector screen
Triad: 3x InWall Silver/4 LCR speakers
Triad: 4x InWall Silver/4 Surround speakers
Triad: 2x InWall Bronze/6 PowerSub
Fortress: 8x Matinee motorised cinema seats
Kaleidescape: Kserver-1500 1U Server
Kaleidescape: Kplayer-6000 1080p Player
Kaleidescape: Kplayer-300 1080p Mini Player
Kaleidescape: Kdisk-2000-L 2TB Disk Cartridge
Rotel: RSP-1570 Preamp Processor
Rotel: RMB-1575 Power Amp
Rotel: RB-1572 Power Amp
Audyssey: MultEQ XT Sound Equalizer
Sky: Sky+HD set-top box
Crestron: CP2E control system
Crestron: TPS-6X 6in wi-fi touchpanel
Crestron: iLux CLS-C6 integrated lighting system
Arcam: FMJ T32 DAB/FM tuner
ReQuest: iQ.V5 1TB Intelligent Media Server
ReQuest: 2x iQ.IMA6 Intelligent Multiroom Amplifier

When the owner of a family home in Buckinghamshire discussed with his family exactly what they wanted from their new basement entertainment area, the unanimous decision was a dedicated cinema room with 'proper cinema seating', a 'big screen' and 'at the movies' sound performance.

He approached the professional systems and solutions experts, Smartcomm, asking them to fit with the aesthetic they had in mind for the space in producing something easy enough for the kids to use.

To this end, Smartcomm's team opted for Runco's high-end VX-300d 1080p projector with a Rainier fixed anamorphic lens coupled with a THX-certified screen to deliver truly cinematic visuals from the Kaleidescape and Sky+HD video sources. Meanwhile, 7.2-channel audio fills the room without actually taking up any physical space, thanks to the use of Triad in-wall speakers and subwoofers.

The installers opted to use a Crestron CP2E as the 'brain' of the system, providing effortless control of all of the integrated devices in the room and ensuring easy upgrades when new technologies become available. Actual hands-on control is taken care of by Crestron's wireless TPS-6X touchpanel, which offers full control of the video and audio sources (including the pre-existing multi-room audio solution running throughout the property), as well as full lighting control in the room to guarantee a truly cinematic ambience at all times. And the simple GUI means that both children and parents never have any trouble accessing their favourite movies.

Working closely with the interior designers and joiners throughout the project, Smartcomm's team still had to confront a couple of challenges along the way. Placing the projector in a hub room behind the cinema room meant that a large hole had to be drilled through a solid wall, and optically perfect fire glass had to be carefully installed to ensure there would be no image distortion. Even trickier, though, was working with the irregular trapezoid shape of the room and the mix of flat wooden and angled fabric-covered wall panelling. All these factors meant that speaker, screen and chair locations had to be carefully considered to guarantee the best cinema experience possible.

This fabulous home installation and various others can be found at www.homecinemagallery.com

36 INSTALLS



A Hole in the wall

The Runco projector is housed in an adjacent room, with the image being projected through a hole in the rear wall of the cinema

B Sit back and relax

You won't find seats as comfortable as these eight motorised recliners from Fortress in your local multiplex

C Curved screen

The fixed frame 2.35:1 screen provides a brighter image by bouncing all light back towards the source, thereby eliminating a single 'hot spot'

D Smart sound

Multiroom audio throughout the entire property is handled by the ReQuest 'Intelligent Media Server' and accompanying six-zone multiroom amplifier

E Sky high(-def)

Enjoy your favourite shows and sports with this Sky+HD box

F Touch and go

The Crestron's easy-to-navigate GUI makes control child's play



Living Entertainment

Award Winning Installations by Musical Images

Musical Images is one of the UK's leading retailers and installers of Home Entertainment, Automation, Lighting and Multiroom systems. Recognised with many major magazine and manufacturer awards, Musical Images offers a truly unsurpassed service.



Throughout our long history we've always recognised the importance of superb customer care and technical expertise. That's why our customers know they can rely on us completely, whatever their needs and whatever their budget.

To experience the world of difference an award winning Home Entertainment specialist can make, visit either of our branches today.



www.musical-images.co.uk


Founder Member
Intelligent Homes
in the Making



Musical Images
is a 3 times winner of
Home Cinema Choice
magazine's "Best
Multiroom Installation"

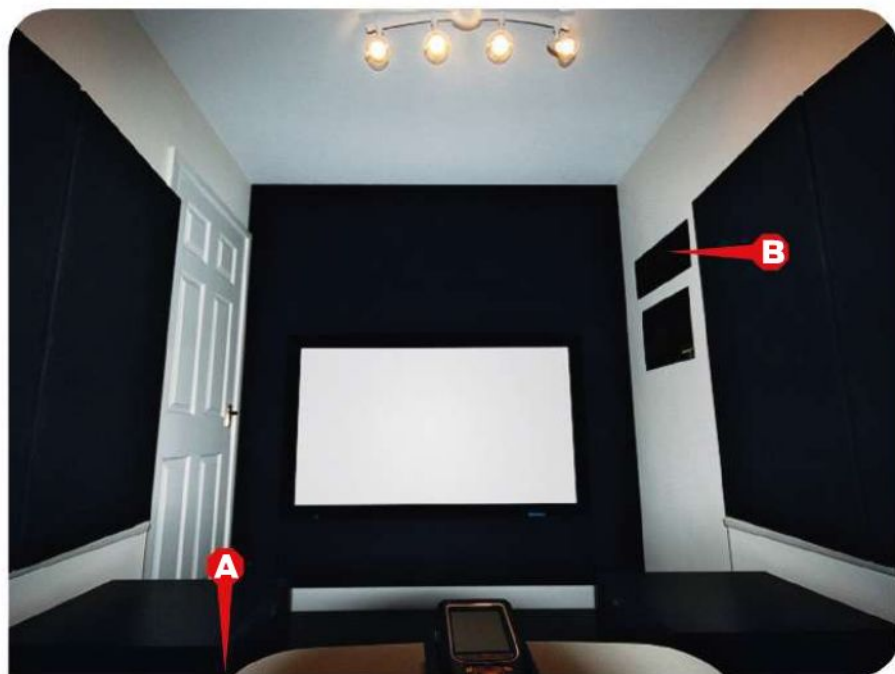
Beckenham Branch: 126 High Street, Beckenham, Kent, BR3 1ED Tel. 020 8663 3777
Edgware Branch: 173 Station Road, Edgware, Middlesex, HA8 7JX Tel. 020 8952 5535

Audio Visual Lifestyle Ltd t/a Musical Images. Please call for opening time details. E-mail: sales@musical-images.co.uk

These photos feature just a small selection of Musical Images' installation work over the past 20 years.

Certified: AV-holic!

Every issue, an **HCC reader** invites you to take a tour of their beloved home cinema setup...



Sent to the garden:
'I am such an AV addict that I ended up studying for a diploma in acoustics'

Introduce yourself...

I'm Andrew Gibson, 31, and I'm an Acoustic Consultant.

And you're an AV-holic?

Yes, definitely; I bought a widescreen Dolby Surround CRT television around 12 years ago, and I've been upgrading my equipment and knowledge ever since. I have even recently converted a spare bedroom into my cinema room.

The acoustics of my cinema room have been a challenge; it only measures 3.6m x 2.2m x 2.4m. I have absorbers and diffusers on the side walls, and absorbers between the speakers on the front wall reduce reflections from the back of the perforated PJ screen. I've equalised the front channels of my system with a third octave equaliser and a sound level meter borrowed from work.

What's in your setup?

A Barco Graphics 808s CRT projector with DVI adaptor; Stewart 60in Luxus Deluxe Screenwall; three Stewart

Cinema Sonic Processors; Onkyo TX-SR876; Lumagen Vision HDQ HD Video Processor; two Denon POA-T10 power amps; Panasonic DMP-BD35 BD deck; Sky HD box; a 5.2 KEF system and much more.

What will be your next equipment purchase?

When my projector eventually fails, I would like to replace it with something like the JVC DLA-HD950. This will also give me room for an extra seat!

How much have you spent on your AV habit over the years?

About £20K in 12 years. eBay is great for second-hand kit.

What's your current fave disc?

Some of my favourite Blu-rays are films that I enjoyed when I was growing up such as *Ghostbusters* and *The Untouchables*. I also enjoyed the showing of the *Star Trek* movies on Channel 4HD.

Are you excited about 3D?

Not at the moment. It would require a lot of expense to upgrade my current setup! ●

Room essentials

A Two's company

Andrew's wife often has a friend over for a movie night. With only two seats in the room, he takes care of projection and ushering duties

B Double bass

Two monster KEF subwoofers (THX-certified 15-inchers) are placed in the centre of either side wall, resulting in a 'reasonably flat frequency response at both listening positions,' says Andrew - and they make good footrests, too, we reckon

C On the source

With a Nintendo Wii, PlayStation 3, Sky HD box, Blu-ray deck and HD DVD player, there's never a shortage of entertainment options

D AV linchpin

This Onkyo TX-SR876 replaced an elderly Denon AVC-A10SE, but the latter brand is still responsible for the two power amps above

Join the club

Do you want to see your home cinema system featured in the pages of *Home Cinema Choice*? If so, log on to www.homecinemachoice.com/avholic where you'll find all the information you need.



BEYOND THE INVISIBLE

Award Winning Luxury Home Cinemas and Multi Room Systems

Control4 LINN

08450 94 93 95
Wimbledon, London
www.beyondtheinvisible.com

FAB RESPONSE INTEGRATION

Multi Award Winning

FAB Audio Visual Ltd
St Albans AL3 6EN
Tel: +44 (0)1727 226 121
www.fabav.co.uk

CEDIA AWARDS 2010 BEST HOME CINEMA

HOME CINEMA AUDIO LIGHTING INTEGRATION



To advertise here please call
Richard Jewels
on
0207 042 4265

HOME CINEMA
Installer of the Year 2009 WINNER

CEDIA AWARDS 2009
BEST HOME CINEMA WINNER

Winner of the UK's most prestigious home cinema awards 2009

FINITE SOLUTIONS
HOME ENTERTAINMENT SPECIALISTS

- Fully project managed build
- In house 3D design service
- CEDIA qualified Designers and Installers
- Award winning showhouse with 4 cinema demo rooms

View over 30 completed projects and our showroom cinemas on our website www.finitesolutions.co.uk

Maida Vale, London
0845 873 8848
london@finitesolutions.co.uk

Leeds, West Yorkshire
0113 255 4765
leeds@finitesolutions.co.uk

CESTON INTEGRATION AWARDS 2008

SOUND ACADEMY

SOUND & VISION CENTER

Demonstration Studios
Cinema Theatre
Home Installation
Multiroom Specialists
In House Service Dept
Mail Order Available

152 High Street, Bloxwich, Walsall
01922 493499 Late Night Thursday
www.soundacademy.co.uk

progressive audiovisual

NEW website online now!!

Complete home control in the palm of your hand

Home Automation · Multi-Room · Home Cinema

isf 01892 860801
THX www.progressive-av.com
covering London and the South East

Oranges & Lemons

Hi-Fi, Home Cinema & Multi-Room Specialists

020 7924 2040

Email: oranges.lemons@virgin.net
61 Webb's Road, Battersea, SW11 6RX
www.oandlhifi.co.uk

BADA





Gadget Awards 2010

OFFICIAL AWARDS PARTNERS



What will YOU choose?

From smartphones to satnavs to tablet computers,
vote for your pick of the year's hottest kit
in the **T3** Gadget Awards 2010

**The shortlist is now open – vote for your favourites
and win £2,000 worth of must-have tech**



Vote now
and win a
MacBook Pro,
HTC Legend
and much
more

Vote now at www.T3.com/awards

OFFICIAL MEDIA PARTNERS



REVIEWS

→ **Hardware highlights** PANASONIC TX-L42D25B LED TV
 MARANTZ SR7005 flagship AV receiver LG 50PK990 plasma SAMSUNG LE46C750 3D TV
 PIONEER BDP-LX53 videophile Blu-ray deck HUMAX HDR-FOX T2 Freeview HD PVR
 GROUP TEST Blu-ray home cinema systems VIVADI MEDIAMASTER MM320 media PC/BD deck

Love me slender

These attractive Crystal Acoustics bipolar floorstanders are just the ticket for delivering convincing cinema sounds to a mid-sized room. Discover why on p54

HCC Ratings key

Outstanding	1 2 3 4 5
Above average	1 2 3 4 5
Acceptable	1 2 3 4 5
Disappointing	1 2 3 4 5
Dire	1 2 3 4 5

HCC DOESN'T BELIEVE IN OVER-PRAISING HARDWARE. CONSEQUENTLY, A THREE-STAR RATING SHOULDN'T BE CONSIDERED A BAD RESULT – IT SIMPLY MEANS THAT A PRODUCT PERFORMS ACCORDING TO ITS CATEGORY POSITION. A FIVE-STAR RATING IS ONLY AWARDED IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Marantz reloaded

With the SR7005 Marantz has shaken off its reputation for staid amp performance and is now a home cinema supremo, as **Richard Stevenson** discovers

I confess that I have never really been excited by Marantz's AV receivers. They were never ahead of the features game and always aired too much on the side of sonic caution for my liking. Safe, reliable, solid and about as exciting as endurance snail racing. When the SR7005 arrived I brewed a really fresh cup of Horlicks, put my slippers on and settled down for an evening of light entertainment.

I should have known something was different the moment the SR7005's curvy-sided fascia came out of the box, like Angelina Jolie emerging from the lake in *Beowulf*. Based on the successful styling of Marantz's high end hi-fi equipment, this multichannel receiver is utterly gorgeous. The curves in all the right places, different fascia textures, brushed knobs and that unique circular display make our previous favourite super-models from Pioneer look as if they have had a good thrashing with the ugly stick.

And just when you are thinking that the display window is going to prove a little petite for comprehensive menu display, you drop down the front flap to reveal a bigger main display. That is so cool.

And then there is the features list. **No longer the stripped down, audiophile device of previous Marantz receivers, the SR7005 is right up there at the cutting edge of AV tech.** Based on the latest generation 32-bit SHARC processor from Analog Devices, it handles all the regular HD audio formats as well as Audyssey MultEQ XT room EQ, Audyssey DSX height/width processing and Dolby Pro-Logic IIz

height channels. It remains a seven-channel amp, which means running height or width channels will require binning rear-back speakers, but at a claimed 125W per channel who is complaining?

Very much a network-ready receiver, the SR7005 offers a dedicated iPod/Phone input, IP addressable and web-access interface and Marantz's bespoke M-Xport interface to hook up to its optional RX1010 Bluetooth module. The networking side is hardwired Ethernet with vTuner net radio and direct access to your Napster and Last.FM accounts.

Apps to go... soon

In development and, alas, not available for this review is a seductive iPhone/Touch app that will control the SR7005 from your Apple device – ideal for when the dog has eaten the relatively mundane remote handset supplied. The 6-in 2-out HDMI connections all have 3D compatible V1.4a spec, and there is an Anchor Bay upscaler to work some hi-def magic into your SD DVD collection and video material.

Under the hood, Marantz has gone to town to ensure the SR7005 shakes off the older, rather sedate sound and can drive an action movie as fast, if not faster, than any competing device. The power amplifiers are a current feedback circuit with a whopping transformer power supply for high current on demand. There are a bunch of hand-selected components that would make the most anorak-wearing of hi-fi aficionados nod appreciatively. Much attention has been lavished on separate power

AV/CV

Product:
All new, fully featured AV receiver

Positioning:
On its own at the top of Marantz receiver range

Peers:
Denon AVR-4310,
Onkyo TX-NR5007



More seductive than a date with Betty Draper and likewise guaranteed to drive you mad with excitement



→ Specifications

Dolby True HD: YES and Dolby Pro-Logic IIz
 DTS HD Master Audio: YES and DTS ES 6.1 Discrete
 THX: NO and no loss here
 Universal Remote: YES, with iPhone app to follow!
 Zone 2 Remote: NO see iPhone app
 Multi-channel input: YES, 7.1 RCA
 Multi-channel output: YES, 7.2 RCA
 Multi-room: YES, main + 1 zones
 Phono-stage: YES
 AV inputs: YES 5x composite & RCA audio
 HDMI Switching: YES 6-in 2-out (one front loader), V1.4a
 HDMI audio: YES PCM and bitstream
 Video upscaling: YES to 1080p
 Component video: YES 4-in, 2-out
 iPod dock: YES via USB
 Networking: YES, wired Ethernet, IP, Bluetooth option
 USB reader: YES, WMA, MP3, FLAC and WAV
 Room EQ: YES Audyssey Mult-EQ
 Auto set-up: YES with mic supplied
 Headphone: YES
 Amplification: 7 x 125W claimed
 Tuner: FM/AM, vTuner, Napster, last.FM
 Dimensions: 440(w) x 185(h) x 406(d)mm
 Weight: 13.2Kg
 Also featuring: Audyssey DSX, iPhone/iPod Touch control app available soon; M-Xport for Bluetooth comms; re-introduced MM phono stage; 3D compatible HDMI, audio return channel, DLNA 1.5 certified, current feedback amplifiers, twin displays. IR and 12v triggers



44 REVIEWS

supplies for each key audio section and extensive internal shielding to avoid electrical interference. There's also a Pure Direct mode that closes down all superfluous circuits and features, such as the display.

The SR7005 is a whole lot of receiver for the money and, in technology and features alone, has leapfrogged forward to join the leading pack. Back this up with Marantz's audiophile expertise and this receiver has the potential to be a real winner. So where's the catch? Frankly, there isn't one; well, not a major one anyway. Yes, the build quality could be a little better as the main knobs wobble like weebles with vertigo at the lightest sideway push, and the speaker terminals are rather budget binding posts for a 1.5 kilo-pound amp. Hey-ho.

Belt up for take-off

Horlicks is a bitch to wipe off of the ceiling. Having run the SR7005's Audyssey auto set-up and EQ system, accessed from its slick and easy GUI, I settled down with *Serenity*

on Blu-Ray. Skipping to the chapter where the ship emerges from the ion cloud straight into a huge space battle between the alliance and the reavers, was something of a shock. No longer the restrained Marantz performer of old, this beast reaches deep into electronic soul and pulls out wave after wave of thunderous action, set against a huge soundstage, as well as bass effects so powerful that they threatened the very fabric of the building.

The opening onslaught of missiles exploded with epic scale, causing my room's glass light fitting to vibrate like a demented alarm clock. Very few receivers without separate box power amps manage that and the Marantz's feed to the sub is as prodigious as it is tight. Strenuous, this is a receiver with a real passion for the adrenaline-fuelled side of home movie entertainment! The ship's crash landing is an epic, whirling maelstrom of sonic action, with every effect projected well out into the room and perfectly defined. It's not merely the wall of sound that lesser amps manage to produce, but finely



Through the round window: is a much larger display, revealed by dropping down the hinged panel

Connections

A Component king

A surfeit of inputs for video switching any legacy kit clinging to hi-def analogue component video

B Blue in the tooth

The bespoke M-Xport interface lets you hook up to its optional RX1010 Bluetooth module

C Last resort

The hardwired Ethernet jack is your gateway to network services such as Napster and Last.FM

D Analogue alternative

The SR7005 will happily handle a decoded 7.1 channel feed from a Blu-ray deck

E HDMI maestro

All six HDMI inputs and both outputs are v1.4a and provide plenty of HD and 3D connectivity options

F What a bind

The plastic binding posts used for speaker terminals aren't of the highest build quality



orchestrated sound effects that send the pulse racing.

Taming the beast

When the light fitting threatened to detach itself from the ceiling, I decided I had to manually fine-tune the SR7005's bass management to tame the LFE output a little and thereby keep the house in one piece. Simply put, the main volume on my Velodyne DD18 was set too high and the Marantz, like all Audyssey-based receivers, didn't have the latitude to auto-reduce the sub output enough in relation to the main speakers.

Its max cut of -12dB was applied to the sub, but due to very efficient speakers and Audyssey trying to deliver a reference 80dB level, it was also cutting the main speakers by anything from -9dB to -12dB. While this did mean I had to trim the Velodyne back manually, it didn't stop the SR7005 banging out big low frequency effects with the impact and tautness of an amp of three or four times its price!

The SR7005 is the best Marantz AV receiver to date. It is passionate,

detailed and powerful, and really digs deep into the recording to extract every last bit of information on the disc. With the more sedate parts of *Serenity*, such as its excellent dialogue and interesting character interactions, you can't help but be impressed with the Marantz's attention to detail and big, upfront approach. Yet move to more intense drama like *Girl With The Dragon Tattoo* and SR7005 simply finds new reserves of depth and atmosphere.

It can sound as moody as it is feisty and as intense as it is ebullient, perfectly matching its pace and balance to the movie.

This is no one-genre wonder, but a genuine all-rounder as happy with *The Hurt Locker* as it is with *Toy Story*.

But the SR7005's best trick is actually its own disappearing act. With most movies you won't find yourself listening to the amp or even your speakers. Instead you will find yourself deep within the film, being immersed in the full cinematic effect as the director intended – and that is the best home cinema you can get! ●

→ Tech Labs

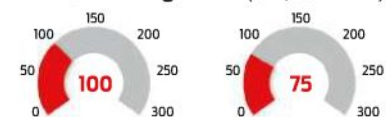
Power consumption: Watts



Idling: this result shows just how power-greedy this amp is

Powered: This is a hefty amount for an AV amp specified at 125W per channel

Power ratings: Watts (8Ω, 0.5% THD)



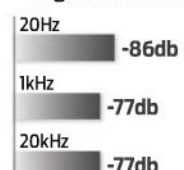
2-channel 8Ω: Marantz states 125W at 0.08% THD, is plausible if one channel driven, but not likely

5-channel 8Ω: This amp is definitely designed for multi-channel over two-channel playback. Performance was better with 7 channels

Untainted: Watts



Signal/noise: db



Fidelity firewall: A measurement of power untainted by distortion (0.05THD, 8Ω, 1kHz), this is an average result that's good for the money

S/N tests: Good results, but they don't meet the THX standard of 85dB



HCC VERDICT

Marantz SR7005
£1,400 Approx

Highs: Superb detail; a movie lover's dream amp; great value

Lows: External build quality; lack of 9-channel output; absence of THX

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

So nearly an LG legend

John Archer finds a lot to like about this 50in plasma TV – and a couple of flaws, too

Proof of just how seriously LG is still taking plasma is abundantly clear in the brand's latest flagship TV, the 50PK990. Thanks to its slim frame, single-layer finish and novel colour scheme, which subtly infuses a touch of blue into the stand and bezel, it certainly cuts a dash.

Doing more to establish the set's significance as a flagship product are its connections. Four HDMI inputs get the ball rolling, and there's excellent support from a couple of USB inputs, a dedicated analogue PC socket, an Ethernet port and an RS232 port that enables wider system integration.

The USBs and Ethernet port are strikingly flexible, too. The former enable you to play JPEGs, MP3 music files and video formats including DivX HD and introduce a wi-fi USB dongle that ships with the TV.

The Ethernet port is there partly because it has to accompany the screen's built-in Freeview HD tuner, while also enabling you to stream in files from a DLNA PC, as well as granting access to LG's new NetCast online TV service.

Portrait of a portal

It's a pity then, that at the time of writing LG's online portal is basic in the extreme. All you get is YouTube, the Picasa photo storage site, and rudimentary weather-checking facilities courtesy of AccuWeather.

Rather more comprehensive are the 50PK990's picture adjustment options. The Imaging Science Foundation (ISF) only awards its endorsements to TVs that it regards as flexible enough for professional calibration and this one fits the bill.

There's a reasonably flexible colour management tool and

gamma adjustment alongside the usual tweaks. There's also a startlingly extensive suite of picture processing options designed to boost motion handling, contrast, noise levels and colour gamut.

If you don't want to pay the ISF to fine-tune your picture settings for you, an easier option is LG's Picture Wizard tool, which guides you through the key set-up options using a selection of test signals.

The ISF isn't the only independent organisation that's backing the 50PK990. For it's also got a THX preset, pre-calibrated to deliver a certifiable picture good enough to meet its tough image quality criteria.

And for the most part, we fully concur with THX's trust in the set. For instance, during the playback of *30 Days of Night* on Blu-ray and a couple of missions on *Left 4 Dead 2* on the Xbox 360, **the TV's black level response is consistently excellent**, with the screen reproducing much deeper, richer and more natural blacks than LG's previous plasma generation. In fact, their profundity only fall marginally short of those on Panasonic's latest G20, V20 and VT20 plasma models, which set a high standard.

A positive contribution to the 50PK990's black level prowess comes from an integral TruBlack screen filter that reduces the impact reflections and glare have on images.

Making dark hues look all the more intense, meanwhile, is the TV's exceptionally potent colour reproduction – commonly a slight weakness of plasma technology. During *30 Days of Night*'s rare bright moments, however, colours look as vibrant and aggressive as those of LG's best LCD/LED TVs.

AV/CV

Product:
50in plasma with THX and ISF endorsement

Positioning:
In LG's top tier of PDPs. The step-down PK790 range lacks the USB wi-fi dongle and TruBlack filter

Peers:
Panasonic TX-P50G20;
Samsung PS50A756

Tough image:
The LG's THX preset is where you should head for cinematic pictures



→ Specifications

3D: NO **HD Ready:** YES With 1080p/24 support

Tuner: YES Freeview HD

Component: YES 1 **HDMI:** YES 4 HDMI inputs

PC input: YES 1 D-Sub **Resolution:** 1920 x 1080

Sound: 20W

Brightness (claimed): N/A

Contrast ratio (claimed): 3,000,000:1

Dimensions: 1184(w) x 739(h) x 52(d)mm **Weight:** 30.2kg

Also featuring: 600Hz processing; MPEG noise reduction; TruBlack filter design; Bluetooth support; NetCast online features; intelligent sensor technology; Energy Saving recommended; built-in picture wizard; colour management; wide colour gamut option



Seal of approval:

Colours remain true and bold, even if you are viewing from an angle



The bold colours have been achieved without compromising tonal naturalism and blend subtlety. And they are pretty much immune to the often severe viewing angle limitations associated with LCD TVs.

Meanwhile, the unnaturally rapid movement of *30 Days'* vampires, along with the near-constant flurry of zombies in *Left 4 Dead 2*, both provide ample evidence of how good the screen's motion handling is. Its 600Hz sub-field drive engine helps motion-packed scenes avoid judder and smearing. You can cause the odd processing side effect if you set the noise reduction and motion handling circuitry too high, but overall the processing package's plus points far outweigh the negatives.

Sharp implement

The 50PK990 delivers some impressively detailed pictures from our two HD test sources. And it does so without the slightly gritty look that sometimes appears with HD plasma pictures (provided, at least, that you don't activate the set's flawed Edge Enhancement option, or ramp the Sharpness higher than level 50).

Upscaling of standard-def sources is far better than LG's previous plasma range, and both Sky News and *Pirates of The Caribbean* on DVD translate to the screen's full HD resolution much more crisply than expected. Noise, too, is better suppressed, and while there are more rogue colour tones in evidence with standard-def feeds than HD ones, they're nothing like as rife as they were last year.

While the 50PK990 is good enough to finally put LG's plasma screens on the map alongside its established LCD TVs, it won't be challenging Panasonic's dominance

of the sector, because it suffers from a couple of undeniable flaws.

The worst of these involves image retention, where **bright parts of pictures can leave ghostly shadows behind** after they're supposed to have disappeared. This isn't to be confused with screen burn; I haven't seen evidence to suggest that the shadows could become permanent. But the spectral remnants of pictures can linger on for quite a few seconds, and that's enough to be distracting, especially when a source skips from a bright scene to a dark one.

Time was when all plasma TVs used to suffer from a degree of image retention, requiring you to be extra vigilant regarding logos and other long-term stationary image features for the first 100hrs or so of the TV's life. But Samsung and Panasonic have all but removed the phenomenon from their screens now, so it's hard to comprehend why LG is lagging so far behind. Even having to tolerate it for the first 100hrs or so seems wholly unnecessary today.

Another careless problem that undermines the 50PK990's extensive good work is a curious streaking effect, whereby shadowy stripes sometimes extend across the screen from the right-hand sides of particularly bright objects. Stranger still, I only noticed this when playing games from the Xbox 360 console. But really, it shouldn't happen at all.

Turning attention to the 50PK990's audio, I was quite pleased by its open, decently powerful soundstage and the way it doesn't start to sound thin and cramped during a full-tilt action sequence. But the set does suffer a bit from the lack of deep bass that's so prevalent in the flat TV world

→ Tech Labs**Power consumption: Watts**

White screen: Reading taken with energy-save off, but none of the power saver modes make much difference

Test footage: With movie footage, consumption averages around 260W

TV Contrast: Ratio**Colour accuracy**

Picture: An impressive real-world contrast figure, although brightness (12.5fL) is low. If you want the best from this set, view in a darkened room

Presets: Unusually, white balance can be adjusted continuously between 'cold' and 'warm' (50 steps either way). W26 is the closest to 6,500K (6600K measured). There's also an ISF Expert mode with comprehensive colour-management parameters
Cool end: 12,700K
Medium: 8,800K
Warm end: 5,800K

**HCC VERDICT**

LG 50PK990
£1,300 Approx

Highs: Styling; superb value; pictures are excellent in many ways
Lows: Annoying image retention and streaking artefacts; limited online functions

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

Supportive



OmniMount is behind your flat panel – and you

With over 30 years experience, you can trust that OmniMount is the best mounting solution for your panel – and the best brand choice for you. From the smallest speaker to the largest flat panel and everything in between, OmniMount products maximize the home cinema experience. Plus we are dedicated to providing the highest level of customer support making us a brand you can believe in. Want to find out more? Visit omnimount.com anytime.



Flat Panel
Mounts



Home Cinema
Furniture



Speaker Stands
& Mounts



Wall
Furniture



Rack
Systems



Projector
Mounts

OmniMount is a registered
trademark of OmniMount
Systems, Inc. ©2010

Powerhouse PVR

As **Adrian Justins** discovers, Humax raises the bar for Freeview+ HD recorders with a box that puts pleasure back into watching the platform

Of the half dozen or so Freeview+ HD PVRs that have beaten the HDR-FOX T2 to market, none have managed to successfully blend form with function. The designers of the coolest looking boxes are often guilty of crimes against home cinema such as not providing an LED display, not including Dolby Digital 5.1 decoding or creating complex menu systems that are harder to navigate than the Somali coast.

The HDR-FOX T2 looks far more promising, though. The box is stylish and well built, plus it has a fascia that boasts a superior LED display that clearly spells channel names and functions in a legible font. A central power button faintly glows blue around its circumference when in

standby and brightly when switched on. The light changes to red when a recording is taking place. So form follows function.

Connectivity includes back and front USBs, a digital optical audio output and a CI slot for access to Top-Up TV. That optical audio socket is the first one I've come across to actually output Dolby Digital, offering the chance to enjoy 5.1 surround sound. Most boxes can't transcode to DD from AAC (which is used to carry audio description metadata).

More buttons than panto

The remote control is a bit of a let-down, though, as it looks great, but several of the buttons and labels are either too small or too cramped. On the other hand, squeezing

AV/CV

Product:
Freeview+
HD PVR

Positioning:
Only Freeview
HD recorder
available

Peers:
Sagemcom
RT190-320 T2
HD; 3View
3VHD; Philips
HDT 8520

buttons on to the remote helps to simplify the menu system, so that, for example, you can add bookmarks or select favourite channels on the fly.

The HDR-FOX T2 is one of the very few Freeview+ HD PVRs with multimedia capabilities. It can act as a client in a wired network or playback photos, videos and music files stored on a USB flash drive. These can also be copied over to the 500GB hard disk, a process that's simplified by an automatic onscreen prompt. File compatibility is fairly broad, comprising JPEGs, MP3s and most movie codecs accept MKV, but such systems are notoriously flaky. I did not have 100 per cent success despite trying two review samples with some files randomly playing on one or other box.



→ Tech Labs

Power consumption: Watts



Idling: Negligible juice usage is good for an item left in standby

Playing: Nothing that will impact your carbon footprint unduly

More positively, the HDR-FOX T2 is expected to enjoy Video on Demand later in the year, with the BBC's iPlayer and Sky Player joining the PVR party courtesy of a software update. For now, the box's non-Freeview talents are restricted to multimedia file playback from USB or DLNA compliant devices connected over a wired network.

Appetising menu

Designing attractive menu systems is one of Humax's current strengths, made ever easier by some of the unappealing stuff served up by rivals such as Sagemcom and 3View. The fonts, graphics and adjustable translucency of the HDR-FOX T2's menu combine wonderfully with a logical and easy-to-navigate system. Setting up and installing is a breeze, although the optical audio socket on both test boxes proved physically resistant to my selection of optical cables. No such trouble with the HDMI, which will happily output video scaled all the way up to 1080p.

A poorly implemented EPG is a common problem on Freeview boxes, some of which fail to maintain a visual and/or aural connection with the live broadcast. Not so here as **Humax takes the miniature window route that keeps full audio and picture running.** The eight-day EPG

displays seven channels in grid form with two hours' worth of programmes, or you can skip ahead or back by 24 hours via buttons on the remote. Navigation is versatile as you can search by genre or keyword (eg title) or you can choose to filter the EPG to show just TV, radio, HD-only or recent channels.

Pressing OK lets you record the show (or an entire series) or set a reminder. Manual padding (up to 10 minutes at the start and end) can be done from the set-up menu.

Helpfully, the EPG tells you if a show on a standard-definition channel is also showing in HD but not if HD content is native 1080i or upscaled from standard definition. This should be revealed within the programme information pane.

When watching a show, you can call up the info banner, which can scroll through the entire EPG rather than the usual Now and Next limit.

It's not Humax's fault so many low bitrate channels look rubbish, but at least you can be assured of getting the best possible pictures and sound going with the HDR-FOX T2's excellent tuners and recorder. Native HD shows look simply top-notch and are on a par with those found on Freesat and Sky HD. This box makes watching live TV and recordings as enjoyable as can be expected from the Freeview service ●

Fair to view: the external design is stylish and well built

→ Specifications

HDD/PVR: YES 500GB

Tuner: YES Dual T2

HDMI: YES 1

Component output: NO

Digital audio output: YES optical

Phono audio output: YES 1

Dimensions: 380(w) x 252(d)

x 55(h)mm

Weight: 2.8kg

Also featuring: 8-day EPG; series linking; CI slot; Ethernet; 2 x USB (front and rear); Scart; composite video out; RF loopthrough; media streaming (XviD, MP3, JPEG); Dolby Digital output; upscales to 1080p; VoD services via update due by end of year



HCC VERDICT

Humax HDR-FOX T2
£330 Approx

Highs: Ease of use; multimedia storage; Dolby Digital surround

Lows: Can't trim recordings; bit pricey

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5



Thrills without frills

What this costly deck lacks in features, it more than makes up for on picture and sound performance, especially for Pioneer fans, says **Jim Hill**

Pioneer's pricey player offers none of the niceties that brands use to lure us to the next price point. Instead of 3D, wi-fi, universal playback or even a set of multichannel outputs, this step-up player trades purely on performance. It's a high-risk strategy, given the impressive quality of this year's budget offerings. Lucky then, that the picture quality is spanking.

It's the first deck we've reviewed for a while where the list of things it can't do actually eclipses the feature set. However, it is also the first to offer its own iPhone application. iControlAV is a free download from the iTunes Store and it works a treat, giving you convenient touchscreen access to even the more complex menu settings.

In other respects, this machine is a regular player of plastic construction, but of a reasonably high standard with crisp styling. Pioneer's dual layer

chassis and rubber feet provide the disc mechanism with a good stable platform. There's a USB port at the front and another at the back along with minimal connections.

At this price it's unusual not to see the Super Audio CD and DVD-Audio logos along with a full set of multichannel outputs. The two formats are all but extinct, but it's still a blow for anyone with a back catalogue. It's also a surprising move from the brand that was among the first to market a universal player and is touting this as an audiophile machine. At least the high-resolution movie formats, Dolby TrueHD and DTS-HD Master Audio, are present and correct.

The A to B of web apps

Pioneer has introduced two web applications with this player in the shape of YouTube and an RSS feed. The former adds some amusing clips,

AV/CV

Product:
Blu-ray player

Positioning:
Mid-range performance player aimed at audiophiles

Peers:
Sony BDP-S570;
Pioneer BDP-LX52

but it's slow to open and, frankly, it just highlights how slow the manufacturer is to match rivals with its online offerings.

Finally we come to Blu-ray, which is this deck's *raison d'être* and the news is nearly all good performance-wise. However, you will need to exercise some patience before operating this deck, as it takes an age to load and play a Blu-ray, and the noisy mechanism makes a meal of navigating through the chapters. The stubborn operating system insists that you close the disc drawer before pressing play and that you press stop during playback, sometimes twice, before you are allowed to go to the home page.

The main menu page is an improvement on last year's models, but still rudimentary compared with other brands. What does inspire confidence in the picture quality is the jet black splash screen and

Tech Labs

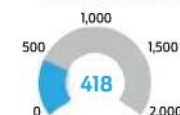
Power consumption: Watts



Idling: With disc in but doing nothing
A good result

Playing: One of the most efficient so far

Audio Jitter: Ps



Analogue:
A reasonable figure, but not quite in the audiophile class

Loading: Boot/Java

Boot speed & tray eject
20s

Tray in to main BD menu
84s

Disc loading & Java:
One of the slowest players of the current crop

Specifications

- 3D:** No
- Video upscaling:** Yes, all resolutions up to 1080p
- Multiregion:** No, Region B for BD and 2 for DVD
- HDMI:** Yes, version 1.3c
- Component:** Yes, for older systems
- Digital Audio out:** Yes, optical and coaxial outputs
- Multichannel audio out:** No, just stereo analogue outputs
- DVD-A/SACD:** No, neither of the audiophile formats are supported
- USB:** Yes, front port for HDD connection
- Dolby True HD/DTS HD decoding:** Yes
- Dolby True HD/DTS HD bitstream:** Yes
- Profile 2.0:** Yes
- Dimensions:** 420(w) x 72(h) x 228(d) mm
- Weight:** 3.3kg
- Features:** BD-Live for accessing online content; YouTube and RSS feeds; 36-bit Deep Colour; PQLS Multichannel Surround (bitstream); iPhone remote; x.v.Colour compatible



razor-sharp Pioneer logo. Sure enough, when you play a Blu-ray and output a 1080p signal at 24fps into a screen, it's hard not to be impressed by the glossy, vivid colours and eye-popping detail.

Where the budget machines struggle to show consistently sharp lines of delineation during motion sequences, the Pioneer holds them together with ease, maintaining straight and even edges throughout.

It also has the bold, consistent colours and dark black levels of a premium player. It is x.v.Colour compliant as well as offering 36-bit Deep Colour processing for similarly specified displays. Look at any blue sky scene and there's virtually no fizz or grain to spoil the view.

Using 2012 as a test Blu-ray disc, we were best able to appreciate the level of detail on offer in the supermarket scene in Chapter six. Looking over the shoulders of the actors, we could read not just the brand names of all the products on the shelves, but the prices, too. So we have to assume that Huggies and Kelloggs did pay for their product placements! During the ensuing earthquake chase scene, we were equally as impressed with the lack of any breakup in the image.

DVDs also benefit from the smooth imagery with some very convincing video upscaling. In short, your standard-def DVDs will look significantly less mushy on this machine than on a budget rival.

Don't look back: Dolby TrueHD and DTS-HD Master Audio fill the void left by audiophile favourites SACD and DVD-A

Sound sensation

Pioneer Blu-ray players usually sound rather good, too, and this one comes with gold-plated connectors, including the HDMI port, an upgraded power supply and Precision Quartz Lock System (PQLS). The latter only comes into play if you are using a Pioneer amp. It effectively reduces audio jitter to almost zero, thereby enhancing the sound, and providing a compelling reason for having all Pioneer kit, if you already own one of the brand's excellent receivers. With a regular amp, in this case a Denon AVR-4810, it sounded clear and open enough through both the analogue outputs and the HDMI output. High-resolution movie soundtracks sound particularly dynamic.

Many Blu-ray players these days fancy themselves as multimedia hubs offering web content, data streaming and USB interfacing. Pioneer has scaled down its media sharing claims and rightly so. Yes, it can read MP3s and JPEGs from an external drive, but not very well. It skipped a few songs and crashed on a photo when I tried it. But then just plugging the drive straight into an amp or TV is a better option anyway.

The LX53 is a perplexing player. It's the brand's flagship, but it lacks the premium build quality of an audiophile deck and the extra features we would expect from a step-up deck. Near perfect picture quality is its trump card, and for a Blu-ray player, that's a very strong card to play.



HCC VERDICT

Pioneer BDP-LX53
£400 Approx

Highs: Vivid colours and dense detail with Blu-ray; good upscaling; great iPhone app available

Lows: No 3D or universal playback; slow disc mechanism; poor online offering; basic operating system

Picture: 1 2 3 4 5

Sound: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

Bipolar expedition

Adam Rayner's golden ears revel in the wide sound field delivered by these flatscreen-friendly floorstanders

AV/CV

Product:
5.1 designer
system with
bipolar
technology

Position:
At the bottom
of Crystal
Acoustics'
floorstanding
range

Peers:
KEF C series;
Mordaunt-
Short
Alumni 5.1;
Tannoy Arena
Lite

This system
is designed
to match your
flatpanel TV



In my time, I have reviewed some monstrous speakers. Whether this is as a result of my golden ears, or because I am big and ugly and can unpack big soundboxes, is moot. Some of the largest and most luxurious have been bipoles. This is when, seemingly just for the hell of it, a whole other set of speaker drivers are placed on the face of the speaker enclosure that is looking the opposite way. Mirage and Definitive Technology are probably the two most famous brands that typically make big speakers in this fashion.

These bipoles from Crystal Acoustics are a bizarre animal by comparison, as they have a bipolar design (versus dipolar), while being affordably priced for a target audience of folks who want speakers to improve sound and complement their flatscreen TV, without dominating the room. Crystal Acoustics, rather quaintly, calls it the 'plasma market'; I'm sure owners of LCD screens will appreciate the gloss black finish, too.

Simple setup

Petite and skinny, these towers arrive in a box of two pairs plus the centre speaker. There's little manual labour to do except screw the towers into their plinths. Thankfully, this only involves two screws per cabinet (no washers, no hex keys, no inexplicable bits of rubber), and they're light enough to lift one-handed. Having recently spent a good afternoon attaching another brand's speakers to their stands, this came as something of a relief.

Completing this 5.1 array is the THX-10SUBt – a woofer way more potent than those described as ideal for partnering the system in the accompanying instruction leaflet.

It's worth noting here that Crystal Acoustics doesn't have a UK distributor, so buyers order their speakers direct from the website. This cuts out the middleman, and results in a lower price point, but also means getting a demo before you get out your wallet is nigh-on impossible. Softening that blow somewhat is the brand's 60-day home trial policy.

The slender towers are called BPT and the centre is termed LCR as, of course, Crystal Acoustics offers a variety of permutations and combinations of its products. So, you could use five of the smaller boxes and ignore the towers. But you'd lose the bipole sound.

Just to prove I'm not a total multichannel nut, I did try the front pair on their own, with the bass removed as a 2.0 experiment upon setting up, and while the teeny weeny, Alucone piston drivers are immensely rigid and do go in and out a long way for their size, it is still a three-incher and I was deeply underwhelmed. In fact, when I fired up the TV through it for a bit of Glastonbury, added the resident Pioneer LX-81 decoder and posh Acurus five-channel external amp just for stereo, my Panasonic TV's built-in speakers wiped the floor with them.

Downcast, I spun up a Blu-ray. I'm still badly in the grip of *Avatar* and am learning the soundtrack a treat. And, on DTS-HD Master Audio, the point of this system finally became clear.

Serious synergy

As I'd guessed, the THX-guaranteed 10in subwoofer felt out of place – like a V8 lump in a shopping cart, it was wildly overpowered for the system. But the bipolar towers did a very clever thing indeed. The synergy created is excellent, with all those tiny three-inch drivers adding up to a very crisp midband with great definition and accuracy, honed by a lovely lack of power compression, every bit as tasty as when served up by Acoustic Energy-branded speakers. And, as long as the level isn't wicked up too far, they do this incredible, sweet yet diffuse-edged sound field.

I had the towers' tweeters above my ear height on installation, and when our hero blunders off into the deadliest jungle within six light years of Terra, the sounds of Pandoran creatures were all around and above me. I was getting funny yipping noises to the extreme right-hand corner of the room, and **the animals sounded like they were ranged into the distance, as well as close by**. It was a deeper sound field than I'd expected for £650.

It may have an ambitious design brief – with some huge limitations placed upon it by the diminutive 3in cones, so far as ultimate scale is concerned – but at sensible levels, Crystal Acoustics' BPT5-10BL system delivers a real bipolar spread. And getting that from stuff this affordable and small is certainly an impressive achievement. Definitely worth considering if you have a small viewing room.

→ Specifications

Crystal Audio Bipolar BPT towers

Drive Units: Two 3in concave Alucone midbass drivers in bipolar array – one fore and one aft, plus one 1in Aluminium dome tweeter with electronic protection
Enclosure: 2-way front ported
Frequency Response: 120Hz to 22kHz
Sensitivity: 90dB (2.83V @ 1m)
Power Handling: 125W
Dimensions: 120(w) x 1050(h) x 80(d)mm
Weight: 5.5Kg
Connections: Single set of binding posts

Crystal Audio LCR centre

Drive units: Two 3in concave Alucone midbass drivers, plus one 1in Aluminium dome tweeter with electronic protection
Enclosure: 2-way front ported
Frequency Response: 120Hz to 22kHz
Sensitivity: 90dB (2.83V @ 1m)
Power handling: 125W
Dimensions: 440(w) x 100(h) x 80(d)mm
Weight: 2.5Kg
Connections: Single set of binding posts

Crystal Audio THX-10SUBt

Drive Unit: One 10in (254mm) down-firing long throw paper cone woofer
Enclosure: Dual ported
Frequency Response: 35Hz to 200Hz anechoic, in-room from 19Hz to 350Hz. THX Select certified
On board power: 120W RMS
Dimensions: 280(w) x 475(h) x 470(d)mm
Weight: 20Kg
Connections: Single phono input for mono LFE



HCC VERDICT

Crystal Acoustics Bipolar Series BPT5-10BL
£600 Approx

Highs: They really do deliver that bipolar sexy spread-out sound field
Lows: System provided was unbalanced

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5
Design: 1 2 3 4 5
Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

marantz®
because music matters

DON'T
LOSE A NOTE OF
THE ORIGINAL

www.marantz.com

HOME CINEMA

Choice

Future Publishing Limited
2 Balcombe Street, London NW1 6NW
Tel: 020 7042 4000 Fax: 020 7042 4539

EDITORIAL

Editor-in-Chief Steve May
Editor Chris Jenkins
Deputy Editor Mark Craven
News Editor Anton van Beek
Art Editor John Rook
Production Editor Jill Lubetkin

CONTRIBUTORS

Takura Maeva, Richard Stevenson, John Archer, Barry Fox, Adam Rayner, Adrian Justins, Martin Pipe, Jim Hill
Photography Rob Monk, Kevin Nixon, Will Ireland
Creative Director Robin Abbott
Editorial Director Jim Douglas

ADVERTISING

Advertising Director Rob Elms 020 7042 4272
Senior Sales Executive Julian Tozer 020 7042 4273
Sales Executive Tony Martin 020 7042 4253
Advertising Fax 020 7042 4159
London Sales Director Malcolm Stoodley
Ad Director Central Sales Jude Daniels 020 7042 4105
Commercial Development Manager, Future 360
Luke Bilton, 0207 0424112 Nortcliffe 020 7042 4153

MARKETING

Brand Marketing Manager Libby Brook

CIRCULATION

Trade Marketing Director Rachel Cock

PRINT & PRODUCTION

Production Managers Ralph Stringer, Roberta Lealand
Head of Production Richard Mason
Image manipulation James Wootton, Thadd Hendrickse, Steven Wood
Printed in the UK by Polestar Colchester and Wyndeham
Grange on behalf of Future
Distributed in the UK by Seymour Distribution Ltd, 2 East
Poultry Avenue, London EC1A 9PT. Tel: 020 7429 4000
Veneered boards: supplied by Ton Xanthas @ Reliance
Veneer Company LTD (London 020 8802 2361,
www.relianceveneers.co.uk) Wallpaper: Supplied from
wallpaperdirect (www.wallpaperdirect.co.uk) & John
Lewis (www.johnlewis.com)

LICENSING

Head of International Licensing
Tim Hudson, thudson@futurenet.co.uk
Tel: +44 (0)1225 442244 Fax: +44 (0)1225 732275

FUTURE PUBLISHING LIMITED

Group Publisher Pat Eggington
Publishing Director Stuart Anderton
Chief Operating Officer Simon Wear
Chief Executive Mark Wood

WANT TO SUBSCRIBE?

Phone our UK hotline on 0844 848 2852
Subscribe online at www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk
Next issue on sale: 21 October 2010

Want to work for Future?

Visit www.futurenet.com/jobs



A member
of the Audit
Bureau of
Circulations



Future produces carefully targeted magazines, websites and events for people with a passion. We publish more than 100 magazines, websites and events and we export or license our publications to 90 countries across the world.

Future plc is a public company
quoted on the London Stock
Exchange (symbol: FUTR).

www.futureplc.com

Chief Executive Steve Spring
Non-executive Chairman Roger Parry
Group Finance Director John Bowman
Tel: +44 (0)20 7042 4000 (London)
Tel: +44 (0)1225 442244 (Bath)

© Future Publishing Limited 2010. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be used or reproduced without the written permission of the publisher, Future Publishing Limited (company number 2008885) is registered in England and Wales. The registered office of Future Publishing Limited is at Beauford Court, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW. All information contained in this magazine is for information only and is, as far as we are aware, correct at the time of going to press. Future cannot accept any responsibility for errors or inaccuracies in such information. Readers are advised to contact manufacturers and retailers directly with regard to the price of products/services referred to in this magazine. If you submit unsolicited material to us, you automatically grant Future a licence to publish your submission in whole or in part in all editions of the magazine, including licensed editions worldwide and in any physical or digital format throughout the world. Any material you submit is sent at your risk and, although every care is taken, neither Future nor its employees, agents or subcontractors shall be liable for loss or damage. Home Cinema Choice™ is the trademark of Future Publishing Limited.



We are committed to only using magazine paper which is derived from well managed, certified forestry and chlorine-free manufacture. Future Publishing and its paper suppliers have been independently certified in accordance with the rules of the FSC (Forest Stewardship Council).



When you have finished with this magazine please recycle it.

Projection screens: find one to suit you, p22



WELCOME

While this issue has been in production, we've been away in Berlin at the giant IFA show, so you'll find a full round-up of all the latest home cinema tech both on our website now (www.homecinemachoice.com),



and in next month's magazine.

But because we're ahead of the curve, in this issue we can offer you an exclusive preview of one of the stars of the show - Philips' latest Cinema 21:9 TV. If the original was swoony, the addition of LED backlighting and 3D to the new model has made it even more irresistible. Read all about it on page 28.

If, on the other hand, you're contemplating a video projector, don't miss our screen guide on page 22 - it's the best advice you'll find anywhere on choosing and using a projection screen.

With a killer Marantz amp on page 42 and some stunning Crystal Audio speakers on page 54, there's something for everyone this month. And don't forget you can win a Sony TV and Simpsons DVDs, too on page. The fun starts here...!

Chris Jenkins
Editor

TEAM HCC

Steve May:

HCC's Editor-in-Chief has a stunning 20+ years as a CE journo on his clock



Anton van Beek:

News Ed Anton began his pro-videophile career over 11 years ago



Mark Craven:

HCC's newly-appointed Deputy Editor cut his teeth on the Sub's bench



Chris Jenkins:

Our ISF-calibrated Editor used to run Future's Tech Laboratories



John Rook:

Art Editor John first worked on HCC back in 1999, when TVs were made of wood



Jill Lubetkin:

HCC's Prod Ed is new to the mag, but a stalwart figure of the AV department



MENU

WIN
THE SIMPSONS
DVDS & A
SONY HDTV
see page 76

BULLETIN

The place for hot products, trends and technology. Starts... p7

08 Northern lights

'Affordable high-end' is the key to PSB Speakers' Imagine 5.1 system

09 Sony lights up 3D projection

Sony Professional's Tak Nakane reveals all about the tech behind its 3D projector

10 Nokia's N8 AV hybrid

The mobile phone that's getting ready to take on portable media players

12 Yesterday and today

Denon celebrates its 100th anniversary with exclusive Special Edition product line

FEATURES

In-depth interviews and special reports. Starts... p22

22 Taking home cinema to the max

The definitive guide to buying a projector screen for your home cinema. Plus, we review Image Screen's new iMasque

32 Home Cinema Hero

This issue, the films of David Lynch go under the HCC microscope

74 Finishing touches

We round up the latest AV accessories

INSTALLS

Planning a home cinema? Then this is the place to be...

34 It's a family affair

Pro-installer Smartcomm unearths a basement cinema for the entire family

38 Certified: AV-holic!

Another HCC reader shares the secrets behind their AV setup

07



Single-box rebellion

Denon unleashes its 'wallet-friendly' new 5.1 speaker package

HOME CINEMA
Choice
WORLD
EXCLUSIVE!



COVER
STORY

3D adds another level to 21:9 TV

HCC visits Philips' R&D lab for an exclusive hands-on with the brand's debut 3D Cinema 21:9 TV and 9000 series LEDs

78 System heaven

Will any of these all-in-one Blu-ray systems make you want to scrap your separates?

LG HD-965TZ

Panasonic SC-BT230

Samsung HT-C6730-

Sony BDV-E370



TECH LABS

Our guarantee to you:

Equipment reviewed in *Home Cinema Choice* is measured and quantified by Future Tech Labs, which for more than 15 years has set the standard for independent AV test & measurement. The findings of the Tech Labs are used to underpin the subjective opinions of our Reviews team, ensuring that you receive the best possible advice when it comes to planning your next purchase



CO-STARRING

This issue's team of expert writers are the best qualified in the business

Adam Rayner:

The UK's foremost expert in extreme audio writes about bass, hi-fi and cartoons



Richard Stevenson:

Industry veteran and former Editor of UK CE trade journal ERT



Jim Hill:

Apple fanatic Hill is the former editor of *T3 Home* and a *What Hi-Fi* escapee



Martin Pipe:

Technology specialist Martin co-developed HCC's Tech Lab operation



John Archer:

The UK's most experienced TV tester cut his teeth as an early HCC staffer



Adrian Justins:

Made his name as the editor of *What Video & TV* and *What Home Cinema*





PLAYBACK

HCC's software experts cast a critical eye over the latest DVD and Blu-ray titles... p89

- 90 Kick-Ass** (BD)
- 91 AfterLife** (BD)
- Cemetery Junction** (BD)
- The Blind Side** (BD)
- Dollhouse: Season Two** (BD)
- 92 Forbidden Planet** (BD)
- La Planete Sauvage** (BD)
- Mars Attacks!** (BD)
- Dr Who: Time and the Rani** (DVD)
- Beyond the Rave** (DVD)
- 93 Robin Hood: Director's Cut** (BD)
- 94 Glee: The Complete First Season** (BD)
- The Third Man** (BD)
- Breathless** (BD)
- Mulholland Drive** (BD)
- Se7en** (BD)
- 95 The Horde** (DVD)
- 14 Blades** (BD)
- The Storm Warriors: Ultimate Edition** (BD)
- Inferno** (BD)
- [Rec]2** (BD)



42



46



50



54



58



60

REVIEWS

With a focus on performance, these are in-depth tests you can trust... p41

42 Marantz SR7005

Marantz shakes off its old reputation with this astonishing AV receiver

46 LG 50PK990

Can LG take on the likes of Panasonic with its new 50in flagship plasma?

50 Humax HDR-FOX T2

Bar-raising set-top box that puts the pleasure back into watching Freeview+ HD

52 Pioneer BDP-LX53

A no-frills Blu-ray spinner that still delivers plenty of AV thrills

54 Crystal Acoustics Bipolar Series BPT5-10BL

Flatscreen-friendly floorstanders that deliver a wonderfully wide soundfield

56 Samsung BD-C7500

This well-specced Blu-ray deck is designed to adorn your wall

58 Samsung LE46C750

Korean giant brings its 3D know-how to the mass market with this 46in stunner

60 Runco LS-5

This high-end projector flirts with the mainstream to spectacular effect

62 Procella Audio P10/P8/P6

Custom install-based 5.1 speaker array

66 Panasonic TX-L42D25B

The plasma king tries its hand at LED TV

70 Vivadi MediaMaster MM320

Affordable multi-room media server

72 Squeezebox Touch

Network music player with added touchscreen

72 ViewSonic VMP74

Full HD network media player

PLUS...

76 Competitions

Win *The Simpsons* DVDs and a Sony HDTV. Plus, *Robin Hood: Director's Cut*, *Fanboys* and *Cop Out* Blu-rays up for grabs!

96 Feedback

For tech queries or plain old moaning, there's no better venue!

101 Select

Your essential guide to the UK's best AV gear. Peruse then choose!

114 Next Issue

All of the hottest stories and products from the IFA technology expo

98

Subscribe!

Save money on the world's best AV mag and get a TrickleStar TV TrickleSaver power-saving gizmo!





HD RECORDING MADE EASY



HIGH DEFINITION DIGITAL TV RECORDERS

DTR94320S HD / DTR94500S HD

SAGEMCOM BRINGS YOU EASY HD

- Smart, simple to use HD digital recorders
- Pause, rewind and record live TV
- Huge 320GB and 500GB hard disk drive
- Crystal clear sound quality

FREESAT + BRINGS YOU

- Instant access to the very best of HD programmes
- Over 140 TV and radio channels
- 8 day TV listings
- Parental Control

Why wait, visit www.sagemcomdigital.co.uk today



SAGEMCOM

BULLETIN

→ **News highlights** PSB IMAGINE High-performance 5.1 system speakers hit the UK
DENON SCORES A CENTURY A company engineer looks to the future **IRON MAN 2** Robert Downey Jr
reprises the role on Blu-ray and DVD **DEMO'D** One-stop guide to the AV highlights of *Psycho*
PREVIEW REPORT on Sony's improved 3D projector **AND MORE!**

Single-box rebellion

Denon DHT-1311XP → www.denon.co.uk



Denon isn't normally associated with one-box home cinema solutions, but this month the company introduces this desirable and affordable 5.1-audio package. Priced at just £500, the system comprises the brand's 110W x 5-channel AVR-1311 receiver and the SYS-391HT 5.1 speaker package (consisting of 2-way front and centre speakers, two full-range surround speakers and a newly designed 100W sub with 8in woofer). The receiver is HDMI 1.4a compliant and offers full 3D pass-through.

HCC Online...

Looking for breaking AV news, blogs, features, & reviews? For your daily fix visit us at www.homecinemachoice.com Follow us on Twitter @hccmag



Northern lights

PSB Imagine loudspeakers → www.armourhe.co.uk

Canadian high-performance loudspeaker manufacturer, PSB Speakers, has introduced an 'affordable high-end' 5.1 home cinema system to its Imagine range, dedicated to the UK market. The PSB Imagine Home Cinema system comprises the Imagine T three-driver, two-and-a-half-way tower, full-range floorstander (£1,225 per pair), the new Imagine B two-way stand/bookshelf-mounts designed for rear-channel playback (£695 a pair), the Imagine C dual-woofer horizontal two-way centre (£495) and the compact SubSeries HD8 subwoofer (£800). The latter claims to 'fool' the HD8 cabinet into behaving as a much larger enclosure with longer ports.

Partner with...

Yamaha RX-V3067

High-end AV receiver, £1,500 approx



Yamaha's new flagship receiver packs in enough features to keep even the most demanding audiophile happy. These include 11.2-channel compatibility, 8 in/2 out HDMI (V1.4a with 3D Audio Return Channel), HD audio decoding with Cinema DSP 3D, HQV video quality, a new version of Yamaha's Parametric Room Acoustic Optimizer with Reflected Sound control, a learning-capable remote and even an 'oil-damped' hidden control panel. <http://uk.yamaha.com>

New Bronze age



Monitor Audio's Bronze BX speaker range mixes the best of its BR speakers with tech from the

Platinum and RX series. The new line-up boasts all C-CAM drivers, single-bolt driver fixings, improved crossovers, HiVE reflex ports, magnetic grille attachment and four vinyl wood finishes. The range consists of the two-way BX1 (£200 pr) and BX2 (£250 pr) bookshelf speakers, BX5 (£500 pr) and BX6 (£3650 pr) floorstanders, super-compact BX-FX (£250 pr) surrounds, BX-LCR centre (£150), and the BXW-10 sub (£450). www.monitoraudio.co.uk

3D flatscreens



Sony has extended its range of 3D-ready TVs by releasing two network models, the Bravia KDL-NX713 and

NX813. The former is available in 40 and 46in sizes, while the latter is a 55in screen. By adding a 3D Sync Transmitter and Sony Active Shutter glasses you can upgrade them to 3D. Both the 'monolithic' TVs pack Bravia Internet Video for streaming ondemand content, MotionFlow picture processing (100Hz Pro on the N713, 200Hz Pro on the NX813), Dynamic Edge LED backlighting and 2.1 sound systems. www.sony.co.uk

'Any TV' spex



Monster has launched 'the first universal wireless shutter system 3D eyewear',

designed to work with all brands of 3DTV. Styled and sized to fit over glasses if necessary, the Monster Vision Max 3D spex plus a transmitter cost £165, with extra pairs of glasses costing £115. The spex use Active Sync RF tech to ensure reliable communication with the RF transmitter and allow the wi-fi Universal 3D Shutter Transmitter to monitor the signal from any 3D-enabled flatpanel, decode the shutter signals and transmit them to a sensor in the glasses. www.monstercable.com

Sony lights up 3D projection

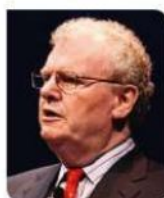
Improved SXRD is the key to a brighter picture

Previewed at the IFA show, Sony's first 3D projector, the VPL-VW90ES, is expected to set jaws dropping when it arrives in the UK in November, priced at around £6,000.

Speaking at the pre-show press conference, Sony CEO Sir Howard Stringer said: 'The 3D train is moving forward, and Sony clearly has the strongest engine in this 3D express.'

Tak Nakane, marketing manager, Sony Professional, gave *HCC* an exclusive preview of the projector's features. He explained that many of the problems of 3D were ironed out on the chipsets used for Sony's Bravia 3D LCD TVs, citing the simulation of 3D from 2D as an example. But he intimated there were still challenges involved in adapting 3D to front projection. 'There was little difficulty transferring the 3D TV chipset to the projector, but the biggest problem is that creating 3D imagery involves a drop in brightness,' he explained. 'The VPL-VW90ES is based on the VW-85, but to overcome the problem it has improved brightness of 100 ANSI lumens, with an improved contrast ratio of 150,000:1.'

The VPL-VW90ES has a 240Hz SXRD panel designed to minimise another problem of 3D, which is flicker. 'We're confident that we've reduced the possibility of



Sir Howard Stringer, CEO of Sony, claims the company is forging ahead with 3D projection plans

discomfort in viewing 3D,' said Tak, although he argued that

properly authored 3D material ought not to cause this problem in the first place.

Another improvement in the SXRD panel is that it has a reduced pixel spacing resulting in improved brightness and less of a visible 'grid' effect. Other features of the VW90E are the Advanced Iris 3 aperture system, and Bravia Engine picture processing.

Mr Nakane claims a special projection screen for use with 3D is unnecessary. 'A matt white screen with 1.3 to 1.4 gain is sufficient. LG's 3D projector requires a silver screen, but Sony's does not involve the viewer in further expense.'

Two pairs of 3D glasses will come with the projector. '3D projection requires an additional polarisation filter attached to the front of the glasses,' explains Tak, 'but this can be detached to use the glasses with a 3D TV.'

So will 3D projection have mass market appeal, or will it be limited to the high end? 'Everyone will be able to enjoy it,' says Tak, adding 'if they enjoyed the 3D experience in a cinema, I think they will want to recreate it at home.'

VPL-VW90ES: First 3D PJ announced



Playlist...

Team *HCC* reveals its Playback picks of the last month

1 High School High (R2 DVD)



Written by the Zucker Bros, madcap zingers fly with dazzling accuracy. Proof that stupid comedies can be funny! *SM*

2 Justice League: Crisis on Two Earths (R2 DVD)



This latest animated feature packs in more superhero spectacle than any live-action movie ever could. *CJ*

3 Leningrad Cowboys Go America (R2 DVD)



This hilarious Aki Kaurismäki movie about Siberia's singing sensation is worth revisiting for the giant quiffs and winklepickers. *JL*

4 In Bruges (US import All-region BD)



After visiting Philips' factory in Bruges, I just had to watch this classic comedy again. *MC*

5 Galaxy of Terror (R1 DVD)



Taken from a new hi-def remaster, this Roger Corman-produced *Alien* knock-off has never looked better. *AvB*

Demo'd!

The AV highlights of...
Psycho on Blu-ray

Distinguishing marks



14.46: The outstanding quality of the Blu-ray's remastered and restored VC-1 1.85:1 1080p encode becomes quickly apparent in shots like this close-up of the cop peering into Marion's car.

Play with the traffic



19.03: The boffins at French company Audionamix have worked wonders with this DTS-HD MA 5.1 soundscape. On the new mix simple effects like the sound of cars driving from right-to-left (and vice versa) across the frame can be followed across your front speakers.

Shower scene



46.57: *Psycho*'s famous shower sequence is a masterpiece of fast-cut imagery (90 shots taken from 70 different camera angles) working in perfect harmony with Bernard Herrmann's screeching score. And, unsurprisingly, it looks and sounds better than ever now.

Crickets unearthed



58.41: The sequence where Norman disposes of the evidence of the murder is another showcase for the encode's deep, rich blacks and excellent fine detail. And the new 5.1 mix has picked out and separated the sound of crickets, previously buried in the original mono track.

Nokia's N8 is an AV hybrid

First phone to output HD video and surround sound from HDMI

The worlds of personal media players and mobile phones have long been converging. We've seen several handheld devices over the past 18 months that attempt to combine the two functions, but at last, the first genuine media player/mobile hybrid has arrived in the shape of the remarkable Nokia N8.

This is the first mobile phone able to output HD video and multichannel surround sound via a mini-HDMI output (an adaptor is supplied in the box). It's also the first to support Dolby Digital Plus, the next generation codec which builds upon the success of Dolby Digital 5.1. All DD+ decoders are fully backwards compatible with first generation DD5.1, however, the Plus suffix means that it can deliver high-quality 5.1 within a low bandwidth, puny bitrate environment. This makes it attractive to both TV broadcasters and content owners looking to distribute high-performance files within tight space constraints.

To put Nokia's claims to the test, *HCC* was invited along to Dolby Laboratories' Wootton Bassett HQ to meet with Dolby's senior technical marketing manager Jonathan Jowitt. With the device hooked up to a regular home cinema system, we were treated to a trailer for *Tron: Legacy* and a clip from *Kung Fu Panda*, both encoded in AVC at 720p. The resulting visuals were crisp and detailed, but more impressive still were the powerful and immersive DD+ surround tracks; subjectively *Kung Fu Panda* sounded exactly the same as the standard DVD DD5.1 track, despite the significant difference in bandwidth.

'We think that clip sets a good benchmark for quality,' says Jowitt. 'If you think about most mobile TV channels, they've been a bit lacklustre.'



Jonathan Jowitt, Dolby's senior technical marketing manager, says there's a lot of 5.1 content out there to use

They've not whet the appetite of the consumer

very well, and I don't think there's been a lot of investment into the quality. You'd be hard-pushed to find a really good portable movie-based or TV-based service... iPlayer excluded, because mobile operators can't really invest as much money as they want.'

Jowitt thinks that, when it comes to full-length movies, 'the more predictable or reliable method will be sideloading from your PC or laptop'. But the music industry is excited. 'We've seen a backlash against low-bitrate MP3 from the creators. And now there is better quality,' claims Jowitt. 'Some of the big labels have opened up vaults of 5.1 content to us. Now they're seeing portable devices come onto the market with 5.1, they can see a new way of selling high-definition multichannel music.'

Future PMPs: could offer 5.1 content



Luhrmann's work



Twentieth Century Fox is bringing Baz Luhrmann's two most popular films to Blu-ray in the UK on November 1. *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* and *Moulin Rouge!* are both packed with extras (including new picture-in-picture features), but best of all, Luhrmann has personally overseen brand new hi-def transfers from the original camera negatives with the aid of esteemed digital intermediate colourist, Jan Yarborough, who previously worked on the restorations of *North by Northwest* and the all of the *Godfather* films.
www.fox.co.uk

Extra Predators



The hunt is on once again when the Robert Rodriguez-produced *Predators* comes to DVD and Blu-ray (the latter in the form of a BD/DVD/Digital Copy Triple-Play edition) on November 1 in the UK.

Confirmed extras for the high-definition version include a commentary by Rodriguez and director Nimrod Antal, plus motion comics, six *Evolution of the Species: Predators Reborn* behind-the-scenes featurettes, *The Chosen* featurette, BD-Live Live Lookup functions and nine deleted and extended scenes.
www.fox.co.uk

Frocks-away!



Are the *Sex and the City* films the height of female empowerment or a clear sign that the end of days is almost upon us? Decide for yourself when the four ladies-who-lunch of the apocalypse return to DVD and Blu-ray in the UK with *SATC 2* on November 29. Expect fabulous visuals that show off the gals' ever-changing wardrobes. The Blu-ray platter also offers a director's commentary and five featurettes: *Styling SATC 2*; *Marry Me Liza!*; *Revisiting the 80s*; *The Men of SATC* and *SATC2 Soundtrack: Behind the Scenes with Alicia Keys*.
www.warnerbros.com

A full-page background image featuring Iron Man in his iconic red and gold suit, standing in a heroic pose. Behind him, the larger, grey Iron Monger armor is visible. The scene is set against a dramatic, cloudy sky. The Iron Man suit's arc reactor and helmet visor are illuminated.

Any old Iron?

Iron Man 2 → Paramount → R2 DVD & All-region BD

Robert Downey Jr steps back into the action as high-tech superhero Iron Man on 25 October, when one of the year's hottest blockbusters makes its UK DVD and Blu-ray debut. The two-disc Blu-ray release packs in an AVC 2.35:1 1080p encode of the film with a DTS-HD Master Audio 5.1 soundtrack, plus a commentary by director Jon Favreau; SHIELD Data Vault; pre-viz and animatics; four-part *Making of...* documentary; six featurettes; eight deleted/extended scenes; concept art galleries; three theatrical trailers and an AC/DC music video, with all of the video supplements also encoded in hi-def.

Premiere

HCC's guide to what's happening in the world of TV and films...

Doctor turns wizard?

Former Doctor Who, Sylvester McCoy, is being hotly tipped for the role of wizard Radagast the Brown in the film adaptation of *The Hobbit*. It's just a shame that there's still nobody signed on to direct the film.

Titans will (re)clash



While the HCC team wasn't exactly bowled over by the recent *Clash of the Titans* remake, we're intrigued to see that Warner Bros. is fast-tracking a sequel, with *Darkness Falls* director Jonathan Liebsman behind the camera.

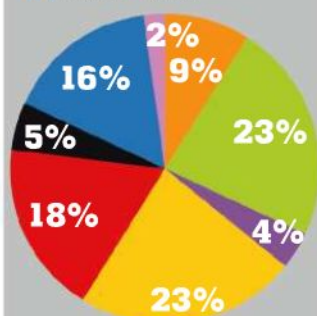
More fantastic?

With the studio eyeing up a 2012 release, it's no surprise that rumours abound regarding Fox's reboot of the *Fantastic Four* franchise. The latest include three potential directors: Joe (The A-Team) Carnahan, James (V for Vendetta) McTeigue and David (Harry Potter) Yates. Word is that Bruce Willis is being chased for the role of Ben Grimm/The Thing.

We asked...

Which of these brands makes the best AV receivers?

Arcam ■ Denon,
 Marantz ■ Onkyo
 Pioneer ■ Sony
 Yamaha ■ Other



Results from www.homecinemachoice.com
Go online for more polling action

Denon: yesterday and today

HCC exclusively talks to the man behind today's AV developments

Few AV companies can claim to have been in the business for 100 years, but that's exactly what Denon is celebrating this year.

Established in 1910, its rich company history includes selling Japan's first gramophone, and more recently, selling the first consumer CD player in the 1970s, the first home theatre system to support Dolby Digital decoding in 1995, and the world's first universal BD/DVD/CD/SACD player in 2005. So what's the secret of Denon's longevity?

Speaking exclusively to HCC from Tokyo, president of the Denon Brand Company, Hirofumi Ichikawa, claims that it's down to a combination of 'creative passion and technical brilliance'. And, he speaks from experience as the man who launched the AV receiver business in the 1980s.

'Our innovations have led to the development of entirely new product categories,' he says.

But does the recent development of portable media players that use compressed audio formats mean that Denon's vision is being degraded by consumer tastes?

'Not at all,' refutes Mr Ichikawa, continuing, 'as digital audio becomes increasingly portable, reproduction quality becomes even more important. We have to deal with new ways of listening to music and the demand for ease of use, but we see formats such as MP3 as secondary to the requirement for high quality. People are always looking for quality in sound and images and that demand will be unchanged.'

He also shared the details of



Centenary: anniversary editions go on sale in November

Zap-tastic MTX-3



The MTX-3 is Crestron's latest addition to its UK lineup of wireless touchpanel

controllers. This elegant £1,175 handset promises 'exceptional control for home theatre, automation and AV presentation', and features a fully customisable 2.8in touchscreen, large tactile buttons, electroluminescent backlighting, infiNET EX wireless performance, long battery life and Instant-Waking behaviour enabling it to 'wake' instantly at the prod of a button or touchscreen.

www.crestron.co.uk

Budget grunt



If you want to add more audio grunt to your PC or living room TV, but don't want to spend a lot,

Logitech's 2.1 speaker system might be the answer. A snip at just £150, the Z623 2.1 system has undergone over 400 acoustic and electrical bench tests to meet the THX standard (for multimedia use). It boasts 200W RMS of power and features volume and frequency controls on the right satellite speaker, plus stereo audio phono inputs and a mini-jack port, enabling you to connect the system to two separate audio sources.

www.logitech.co.uk

Hold it down



The answer to the headaches caused by the noticeable rise in TV volume levels during commercials

could be the GefenTV Auto Volume Stabilizer. Using Dolby Volume tech to keep audio consistent at all times, this neat box of tricks costs about £177 and is designed to sit between the AV source and your AVR or HDTV. Three switchable 'live' inputs/outputs are provided for both analogue (L/R) and digital (optical and coaxial) devices, and when not in use the device moves to standby mode, boosting its green credentials.

www.digi-box.co.uk

This month's top 10 news stories in handy, bite-sized chunks...



1 Face your 3D fears

Sky has been using 3D tech to try and cure arachnophobes with a creepy video of hairy tarantulas crawling out of the screen. First shown at Liverpool's BugWorld Experience last month, the film, narrated by Ralf Little, features a range of wild and domestic spiders.

2 Desmond backs Project

Richard Desmond has kicked off his new reign as owner of Channel 5 by deciding that the broadcaster will rejoin the BBC-backed internet TV service Project Canvas. Previous owner RTL had pulled out of the joint venture back in July, but Desmond is happy to be back onboard.

3 i-CAN adds sports

New brand i-CAN has added Top Up TV functions to its Easy HD Freeview HD receiver, making it the only DVB-T2 set-top box on the market that enables viewers to watch premium sports channels from both Sky and ESPN. The boxes should be on sale by the time you read this, and existing i-CAN Easy HD owners will soon be able to update their set-top boxes via a free software upgrade from the i-CAN website.

4 3D gets guidelines

THX has teamed up with Blu-ray quality assurance and advanced testing facility BluFocus, in order to offer the industry's first 3D certification program for the format. The new THX-BluFocus 3D certification will set authoring and production guidelines and testing procedures for evaluating 3D AV quality, as well as examining 3D Blu-ray disc and player interoperability and 'the physiological effects of 3D on home viewers'.

5 Universal swaps BD

Universal Pictures has launched a *Gladiator* Blu-ray disc replacement program for anybody not happy with what it calls the 'original UK purchased DVNR (digital video noise reduction) feature disc'. If that includes you, simply keep the packaging and send only Disc One with your name and address to: Universal Pictures (UK) Ltd, 'Gladiator Exchange', Prospect House, 80-110

New Oxford Street, London, WC1A 1HB. You'll receive a new non-DVNR version.

6 Discovery zipped on UK 3D

Ofcom recently granted a 3D license to Discovery Communications Europe, and while the company remains tight-lipped about a UK 3D channel, it did recently reveal that a 24hr 3D Discovery Channel would start broadcasting in the US next year.

7 Calibrate from 'over there'

Kalibrate has taken on UK distribution of US display calibration system Chromapure, which aims to make display calibration as simple as possible for the amateur or pro. The software is designed for setting up plasma, LCD or projection devices, using a variety of meters, including Datacolor Spyder and Xrite i1 types. The Chromapure programme undergoes regular updates and the next version promises

integration and automation with video processors such as Dvdo Duo and Lumagen Radiance.

8 Harmful 3D?

No matter what manufacturers say, it seems most people are still anxious about the effects of prolonged use of 3D glasses. New research from US-based Strategy Analytics

shows that of the 2,000 people surveyed, 17 per cent believed viewing 3D content to be harmful to the eyes, while another 55 per cent weren't sure.

9 Use your brains

Japanese newspaper, Yomiuri, claims that Toshiba is in the process of preparing a glasses-free 3DTV for release before the end of the year. The report claims Toshiba's tech 'emits rays of light at different angles, allowing viewers' brains to recreate 3D images without special glasses'. It also claims that this solves the narrow viewing angle issues demonstrated by previous glasses-free 3D solutions.

10 Aliens scrubs up well

In a recent interview about remastering *Aliens* for Blu-ray, James Cameron said 'we went

in and completely de-noised, de-grained it, up-rezzed it, colour corrected it end-to-end, every frame... We got rid of all the grain. It's sharper and clearer and more beautiful than it ever looked.' Can fans 'look forward to' another DNR fest like the *Predator* BD?



Web chat

What's going down on our website? This issue: *Star Wars* on Blu-ray.....



Make something new!

'Will Mr Lucas ever make anything other than *Star Wars* movies? How many times can this man keep re-hashing the franchise? To me these were classic films of my youth, now I'm just getting fed up with the endless re-releases... Stop it, George, and please move on!'

Re-hash king

'Maybe if we tattoo the words "new" and "original" on the side of a big blow-up Jabba the Hutt, he might get the hint – or we could kidnap him and tattoo "re-hash king" on his butt! We should vote which way to go...'

Cash in!

'I bet he will release the movies on Blu-ray then double dip with 3D Blu-ray a year later!'

Can't wait

'Even though I'm not a fan at all of 3D, I personally would like to see them done properly in 3D. Just think of some of the scenes! Trench run, battle on Hoth, asteroid field, attack on Death Star 2, speeder chase, etc. The problem is George may do yet more new Special Editions in 3D, ie change or enhance

some scenes. I'm just looking forward to seeing them on Blu-ray soon.'

Charity case

'If they release them on 3D Blu-ray it will probably save the whole format... Anyway, I'd rather him keep remastering the originals than make any more new ones. And apparently he gives a lot to charity – it makes me feel a little bit better about lining his pockets.'



SHE DESERVES FULL HD



The Playon!HD Full HD media player is the only device you need for home entertainment. Imagine at the touch of a button, your movie, music and photo collection, is brought to life on your TV and through your sound system, in unsurpassed Full HD viewing clarity and spine tingling 7.1 HD audio.

Get rid of the cluttered home entertainment set-up, free your media library from your PC and conveniently store your entire media library on the Playon!HD low-noise, low-power consumption eco-friendly HDD up to 2TB.

With more audio, video and photo file format support than any other player, the Playon!HD is the most highly awarded media player that you and your home entertainment deserve!

Engage your senses - Playon!

www.acryan.com | www.playonhd.com

PLAYON!HD **Store.Play.Stream in Full HD**

Full HD Network Media Player

ACR-PV73100P+ available without HDD | 500GB | 1TB | 1.5TB | 2TB



Greenlife™

The Playon! series uses only eco-friendly, low-power, low-noise operation hard drives.

Available at:

amazon.co.uk

MISCO.co.uk

PLAY.com

SCAN
www.scan.co.uk

HotMags - Free Magazines



POINT OF VIEW

Richard Stevenson turns grumpy old man in his appraisal of the dumbed down, effects-ridden offerings that are today's blockbuster movies

I have got to the age where phrases such as 'back in the day' and 'they don't make them like they used to' trip, easily, from my tongue in the course of daily conversation. I like to think this is the voice of experience and maturity, whereas the wife says it's because I am an old fart.

Unaccustomed as I am to commenting on movies rather than hardware, I recall that they made really good movies once upon a time and they don't make them like they used to. My last few months' viewing have been less than spectacular, with a recent spate of four expensive yet half-baked movies in a row. *Avatar*: special effects over content; *Alice in Wonderland*: style over content; *LoTR* Trilogy on Blu-ray: rampant publisher greed by not offering the extended cut, and finally *Clash of the Titans*: a dire shadow of the Harryhausen original. I am starting to wonder quite why I invest so much time, effort and money in home cinema when half the movie-making industry is putting out rubbish, with millions spent on special affects and just £4.35 paid for plot writing and character development.

I am absolutely convinced that the wow-factor of 3D cinema is further fuelling this dumbing down of movies, too.

Pretty much every film I have seen in 3D thus far has looked fantastic, yet has been spectacularly disappointing as a story. Amazingly, they have all been outstanding successes at the box office too! Not one will make a decent transfer to Blu-ray, 3D or otherwise. Once the public at large gets used to swords sticking out of the screen and flying insects wafting around the room, they are going to realise just how shallow and unrewarding these movies really are.

So I was really delighted to get an email from Amazon last month telling me they were having a sale of classic sci-fi movies on DVD. Priced anywhere between £2 and £4, they were offloading groundbreaking flicks such as *Logan's*

Run, *Fahrenheit 451*, *The Omega Man* and *The Andromeda Strain*. Even *West World* was available, which rates up there in my all-time top movies. I had not seen any of these films for probably 20 years; last watched on VHS ... back in the day.

I remember Yul Brynner being totally mesmerizing as a murderous, rogue cowboy robot, and I fondly recall the excellent special effects – the space-age hovercraft, the robot horses and the control room with its whirling tape reels. The film was well paced, exciting and at the cutting edge of cinematography for its day. James Brolin and Richard Benjamin gave sterling performances and, dammit, I wanted to be Yul Brynner's gunslinger (the bald head notwithstanding).

Rose-tinted memories

Some things are best left as great memories. The film now seems slow and the special effects are positively archaic. The acting is Pinocchio-class wooden and Brynner just wanders around shooting people. Even the robot horses are actually just horses. Every major premise of the movie has since been done better, and after *Terminator* no robot is going to look scary in leather pants and a Stetson. Adding insult to this injury, the film is grainy and colourless on the big screen and the sound is compressed Dolby Stereo.

So, with current movies lacking substance and oldies perhaps best left as nostalgia trips. I decided maybe it was time to hang up the remote control and take up golf.

Thankfully, while I was on Amazon browsing *Putting For Dummies*, I chanced upon *District 9* on Blu-ray. Blimey! Innovative science fiction with great characters and a unique plot – and apparently not made on enough budget to spoil the whole thing with overt special effects. Maybe I'll give the movie industry one last chance...

Are movies getting better or worse through special effects? Let us know what you think: email hcc@futurenet.com

Richard Stevenson has seen a few things in his time and thinks kids, these days, don't know when they're well off...





WELCOME HOME

THE ONE THING THE WORLD'S PREMIER MOVIE THEATRES AND CONCERT HALLS HAVE OVER SYNTHESIS® SYSTEMS? MORE SEATS.

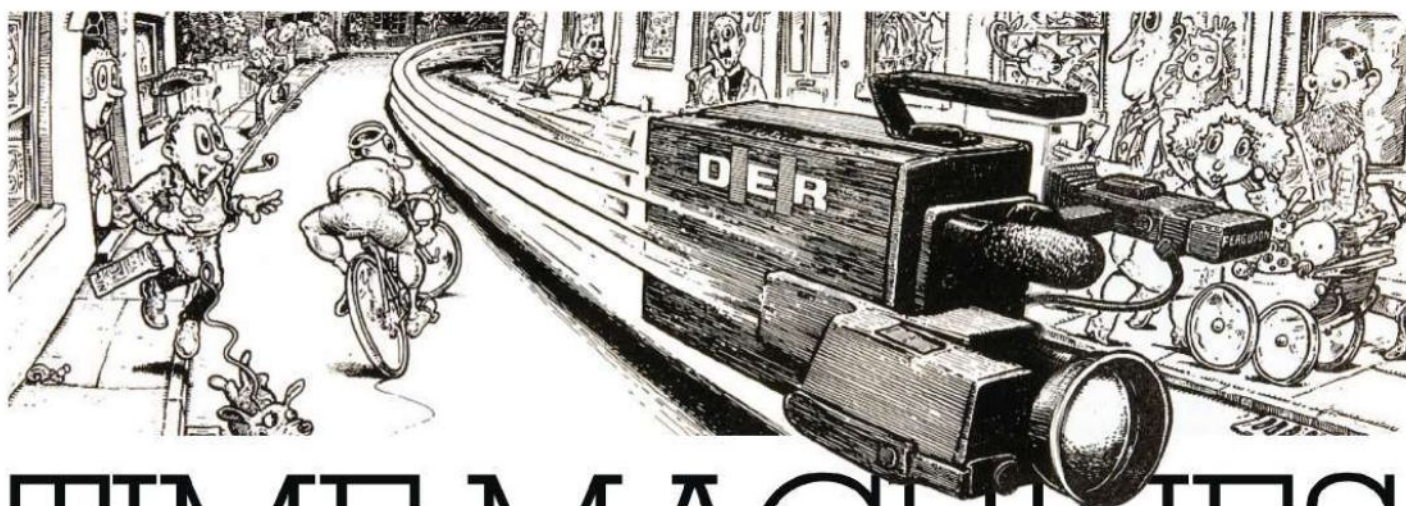
JBL Synthesis® home theatre and music systems are designed and custom-installed to duplicate the electrifying performance characteristics of acclaimed venues like the Samuel Goldwyn Theater and the Sydney Opera House, but on a somewhat more intimate scale. Industrial-grade technologies, materials and engineering, from the most applauded professional brand, deliver systems of uncompromised power and authority for the homes of purists and enthusiasts, as well as film and music professionals, everywhere. As Synthesis owners and audio reviewers alike will tell you, more impressive and realistic residential sound systems can't be found anywhere, at any price.



S Y N T H E S I S ®



01423 359054



TIME MACHINES

Martin Pipe recalls the days when consumers were more likely to rent their home entertainment from a high street shop than to own it outright

Over 30 years ago, the average home had very little electronics, apart from a TV in the lounge, a radio or two and perhaps the most-coveted item of all, the music centre. The latter item alone would have set you back around £300, at a time when the average take-home pay was less than fifty quid a week. Also selling for about the same price was a 22in colour TV set. No remote control, stereo sound or teletext here, just a column of chunky push-buttons with sufficient capacity for six channels and a 4:3 aspect ratio.

We loved our colour tellies, but to actually own one was a rarity. Rental was King. Companies such as Rediffusion, Granada and Radio Rentals had been doing very well since the flickery, monochrome 1950s, and the pinnacle of their success coincided with a massive colour TV boom in the early 1970s.

At one time, Radio Rentals boasted 500 shops, over 3,500 repair technicians and 2 million customers, and was owned by Thorn Industries. This commercial empire also owned Ferguson, a major British TV brand that supplied the bulk of Radio Rentals stock as well. Granada and Rediffusion, meanwhile, had the same parent companies as the respective ITV franchises.

The public, helped by easier credit, were deserting the rental option in favour of outright purchase from competing high street outlets such as Comet, Dixons and Laskys. Naturally, the rental companies were worried, but in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the appearance of the VCR saved their bacon. At that time, these machines were a hefty £500 or more. They were unproven in terms of reliability, added to which there were several formats to choose from.

Although the idea of home video-recording appealed, British consumers felt that renting represented the least risky option. Ferguson started selling, under the Videostar brand,

re-badged JVC VHS VCRs and these were a popular rental choice, especially in Radio Rentals outlets. Indeed, their dominance helped to end the format war; although you could rent Betamax and V2000 hardware, few did. VCRs were changing fast, newer and improved models replaced the old at an unprecedented rate, and **rental customers could update their machines at far less cost than VCR purchasers**. The rental chains disposed of their TVs and VCRs in bulk to entrepreneurs operating in out-of-town industrial estates. These warehouses would usually sell them on to independent shops that would service the equipment, before reselling it or renting it to local customers. However, some ex-rental traders would deal directly with the public, and it was in this way that the author managed to acquire his first hi-fi VCR, a Ferguson 3V43, for £150 in 1990. At far less than half the price of an inferior hi-fi machine, this VHS VCR was internally-retrofitted with a Maplin Nicam decoder shortly thereafter. And it still works. How ironic that it outlasted the major chain that was its first owner.

Long live rental!

When VHS won the format war, the price of VCRs fell considerably, so that outright purchase of VCRs, as with radios and TVs before them, became the norm. In the mid-1980s, some chains offered satellite TV equipment, but the writing was on the wall for rental. Granada rebranded as Box Clever and merged with Radio Rentals in 2000. Now the company only has a presence on the internet (www.boxclever.co.uk) offering products from the likes of Samsung, Toshiba and Philips. Given the speed with which even full HD flatscreen TVs have been rendered obsolete by 3D models, might a rental revival be overdue? ●

*Would you prefer to rent your AV kit than to own it?
Let us know: email hcc@futurenet.com*

The author **Martin Pipe** remembers watching the 1966 World Cup through the shop window of Radio Rentals in Southend





TECH TANTRUM

Barry Fox considers the various methods being proposed for broadcasting 3D telly on 2D platforms, without any visual confusion

I may well scream if yet another corporate sales dork selling 3D TV, pinches the potted history of stereoscopy from Wikipedia and recites: 'polarised screenings were all the rage in the 1950s with big screen movies like *Bwana Devil*, *House of Wax* and *Fort Ti*.' But Wiki doesn't tell the story of what happened to *Fort Ti* in 1982.

TVS, the ITV station then serving Southern England, promised full colour, 3D broadcasting from a secret new process. The *TV Times* distributed 8 million pairs of glasses, while high street retailers offered another 5 million pairs for sale. The so-called 'secret' system was based on the age-old anaglyph idea, with coloured fringes added to overlapping left and right eye images.

Viewers with the special spectacles, which put a red filter over one eye and blue over the other, got an illusion of depth and a bit of colour. But the millions of other viewers who watched *Fort Ti* cowpokes at peak viewing time just saw double. They jammed the switchboards with complaints to both TVS and the regulator (as was), the Independent Broadcasting Authority.

Since then there have been only short 3D test transmissions on terrestrial TV. Sky, a law unto itself with a shed load of satellite channels, does broadcast 3D on a dedicated channel, but only to 3D TV owners who phone up and request it.

But all that may change, and my bet is that it will do so in time for the Olympics. There are already several technical ideas for putting 3D on Freeview (and Freesat) without making 2D viewers think they've dropped acid.

Arqiva, the company that runs the UK's TV and radio transmitters, has been lab-testing a system called '2D Plus Delta' or '2D plus Difference'. Secret over-the-air tests are due soon.

Instead of using two channels to simulcast 2D and 3D versions of the same programmes, as Sky

does, Arqiva broadcasts a single 2D channel for existing Freeview 2D receivers, plus an extra narrow bandwidth channel that new Freeview 3D receivers will be able to pick up and combine with the 2D channel to make a 3D signal for a 3D TV.

In practice, the main broadcast channel will be the left eye image, and the Delta channel is the difference between left and right views, which new 3D receivers will then use to create a right eye image.

Arqiva reckons that the latest Freeview HD receivers have so much spare processing power that it may even be possible to convert them to 3D with a firmware upgrade.

Another possibility is for the extra channel to carry depth cues, like those already deployed by the 2D-to-3D converters inside Samsung and Sony TVs.

A night on the tiles...

Meanwhile Italian company, Sisvel, has promised to demonstrate something completely different at IFA in Berlin 2010. The company's '3D Tile Format' leaves the left eye image untouched, but slices the right image into several (usually three) small tiles that are pieced together around the outside of the left image like a jigsaw.

Sisvel claims that 'existing H.264 decoders, without any change of the firmware, can provide a 2D compatible picture' by extracting the central left eye tile; and existing receivers will only need 'a very simple firmware upgrade (via download) in order to be able to feed a 3D display.'

My money is on Arqiva's simpler system, which is less likely to cause problems for existing receivers. And since Arqiva runs the transmitter network, it will effectively be selling to itself ●

*Do you welcome the introduction of 3D to broadcasting?
Let us know: email hcc@futurenet.com*

Barry Fox
Will be on the Berlin airlift to IFA to view the latest technology from there. We expect his column, 'Ich bin ein Binliner' to be wired over shortly





Ticking all the boxes is just half the story

Our new RX-V667 has all the specifications and performance you'd hope for in a state of the art receiver. But add to that Yamaha's legendary Natural Sound quality plus a price tag that leaves the competition gasping, and we think you'll agree the choice comes down to one!

Discover more at uk.yamaha.com

YAMAHA RX-V667 Development Project DESIGN SPECIFICATIONS CHECKLIST

- HDMI 1.4 with 3D and Audio Return Channel
- 6 in 1 Out HDMI inc front input
- 7 channel surround sound (90W x 7)
- HD Audio decoding with Cinema DSP 3D processing
- New Graphic User Interface with Album Art
- Discrete Amp configuration
- Assignable Amplifiers
- Front Presence Speaker option
- Virtual Presence Speaker Function
- High Quality Video Processing
- Analogue and HDMI upscaling to full HD 1080p
- Motion adaptive and edge adaptive deinterlacing
- iPod/iPhone "Airwired" Wireless Dock Option
- Compressed Music Enhancer with Cinema DSP
- Versatile Zone Control
- Pure Direct
- Low Jitter PLL circuitry
- YPAO automatic speaker set-up
- Suggested Retail Price £450

APPROVED



Also available in black



October 2010



av·hi-fi

Powered by music

Tech diary

The world of AV and film changes fast. **Our calendar** means you don't miss out on any of the excitement

Fanboys:
Buddy movie
that's a
Phantom
Menace fest



Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
				24 Frozen Having made a killing on the festival circuit, writer-director Adam Green's chilly thriller about three skiers trapped overnight on a chairlift makes it to UK cinemas. www.frozen-film.com		
				1 Buried Due in cinemas today is this claustrophobic thriller about a US contractor in Iraq who gets buried alive in a coffin with just a lighter and mobile. http://experienceburied.com		
4 Fanboys Today marks the UK DVD and Blu-ray release of this love letter to <i>Star Wars</i> fandom, following a group of friends on a road trip to steal an early copy of <i>Star Wars: Episode One</i> . www.fanboys-themovie.com	5 Connected Home Global Summit 2010 This 2-day event at the London Heathrow Marriott Hotel aims to explore the impact of converged digital devices and the evolution of broadband access on the connected home. www.avrenevents.com	6 ehome 2010 Running in conjunction with the 3-day electrical products expo, belectro 2010 at Germany's Messe Berlin, this international trade show will be exploring every aspect of networking in homes and commercial buildings. www.ehome-berlin.de	8 Mr Nice Bernard 'Candyman' Rose helms this big screen adaptation of drug smuggler Howard Marks' autobiography. Rhys Ifans plays the man himself. At UK cinemas from today. www.eentertainmentuk.com	9 Happy birthday! Fashion model, turned actor, Brandon Routh, is 31 today. Despite numerous roles on TV and film in recent years, he's best known for playing the iconic superhero in Bryan Singer's <i>Superman Returns</i> .	10 R.I.P Actor, director, producer, screenwriter, author and spinal injury activist, Christopher Reeve, died of a cardiac arrest on this date in 2004. He is best remembered as Superman in the four movies made between 1978 and 1987.	
11 The Exorcist One of the scariest films ever made makes the jump to hi-def today with the UK Blu-ray release of <i>The Exorcist</i> . The 2-disc set includes both cuts of the film plus new featurettes. http://theexorcist.warnerbros.com	13 BFI London Film Festival The UK's biggest film festival celebrates its 54th year with hundreds of screenings over 15 days, starting with the European premiere of Mark Romanek's <i>Never Let Me Go</i> . www.bfi.org.uk/lff	16 Retro cinema Roundhay Garden Scene, the earliest surviving motion picture was shot on this day in 1888. The British short directed by inventor Louis Le Prince features four people walking around a garden and lasts for just under two seconds.	17 Despicable Me Steve Carell leads the all-star voice cast in this CG-animated comedy about a criminal mastermind who meets his match in the form of three orphaned girls. Opens today in the UK. www.despicableme.com	18 Manchester Sound & Vision Show 2010 This weekend-long exhibition at the Renaissance Hotel will be showcasing new products from the likes of Sony, Sim2, Velodyne, Anthem and Philips. www.manchestershow.co.uk	19 Untouchable? On this day in 1931 notorious gangster Al Capone was sentenced to 11 years in prison for tax evasion. Mark the day by watching federal agent Elliot Ness' hunt for Capone in <i>The Untouchables</i> .	
18 The Rocky Horror Picture Show The definitive cult film makes its Blu-ray debut in the UK today, sourced from a new 4K/2K master with DTS-HD MA 7.1 audio and a plethora of juicy new extras. www.rockyhorror.com	23 HCC #188 Start saving your pennies. Your favourite home cinema magazine hits the stands this Thursday, packed to the gills with hardware tests, features, outspoken opinion and full-on software reviews. www.homecinemachoice.com					

100th
Anniversary
since 1910

www.denon100.com

DENON

The sound of success. In 3D



Denon AVR-1911 3D High Definition AV Receiver // How can you improve the AV receiver of the year 2009? By adding even more state-of-the-art features like the most advanced 3D video technologies and a USB port with digital direct playback of an iPod/iphone attached. More, the AVR-1911 supports not only Dolby TrueHD, DTS-HD Master Audio and other HD Audio formats but also Dolby Pro Logic IIz for enhanced vertical and horizontal spatial performance at the front, the essence of 3D acoustics complementing the excitement of 3D video. Visit www.denon.co.uk for more details.



Also look out for:



AVR-1611



AVR-2311

3D

Made for
iPod iPhone

Denon is a trademark or registered trademark of D&M Holdings, Inc. "Made for iPod," and "Made for iPhone," mean that an electronic accessory has been designed to connect specifically to iPod, or iPhone, respectively, and has been certified by the developer to meet Apple performance standards. Apple is not responsible for the operation of this device or its compliance with safety and regulatory standards.

John Archer guides you through the diverse and often confusing world of home cinema projection screens

Taking home cinema to the max

At HCC, we talk a lot about projectors, and not much about projector screens. But this doesn't mean we don't find screens as interesting, or consider them less important to the home cinema experience. Far from it.

One reason we don't review more screens is a practical one; installing and handling such large and cumbersome items can be a nightmare. But the other reason is that the screen market is so diverse, and associated so closely with the specific needs and room conditions of each user, that reviewing individual screens would seem too specific to be worthwhile.

The fact is, though, that if you get the screen wrong, then you will be selling your projector short, no matter how expensive it might have been.

Which type should I choose?

Start off by looking at the different types of mounting options available. There are two main approaches: fixed frame, where the screen is placed in a rigid frame and attached permanently to the wall, or 'roll-away', where it can be rolled up when not in use. Within the latter category

there are also various sub-options we'll consider in a moment.

For people lucky enough to have dedicated home cinema rooms, the fixed frame approach will often be the simplest, since the screen doesn't need to be hidden when not in use. It's widely considered, too, that permanent screens stay more tautly stretched and thus produce more accurate pictures.

Roll-away screens are obviously a great solution for people trying to accommodate a home cinema setup in a room that also gets used for other activities, such as a living room. The most basic of these screens sit on a roller attached to, or hidden in, the ceiling and the user has to manually pull the screen down when needed.

Also very popular is the motorised roll-down variety, where motors drive the screen down into position at the touch of a remote control button. Some projectors carry 12V trigger outputs, in fact, so that they can activate motorised screens automatically when the projector is switched on.

If even having a slim roll-out screen housed on your ceiling feels too

Keep it tight: permanently-fixed screens eliminate concerns about tautness

Down and out: a motorised drop-down screen can be controlled using the 12V trigger on many projectors





intrusive, a further, portable option is the pull-up projection panel. These come fixed inside carry cases that you stand on the floor, so that the screen pulls out of the top and is held upright by a collapsible support frame.

We've found that the more affordable floor-mounted types may not always stand completely upright or even flat. But the fact that you can put them in a cupboard when you're not using them is a practical benefit that will justify the performance compromises for some.

Rigidity and perfect flatness, so crucial to a good picture, are often one of the main reasons some projector screens cost vastly more than others, especially in the roll-away department.

Another key decision is which shape and size of screen you should go for. In terms of shape, there >

Pull and play: pull-out screens can be easily stored out of sight when not in use

Wonder walls?

D-I-Y pitfalls: think before you paint

We know that a lot of people who own projectors don't actually bother with a screen at all. They just point them at a wall and leave it at that.

HCC would never recommend this method, as it will inevitably prevent you from getting anything like the maximum performance from even the most miserably specified projector. Especially if your wall, like so many are, isn't completely true. But if you really don't want to cough up for a screen, here are a few pointers to bear in mind.

First, contrary to what you probably imagine, using plain white wall paint is not a good idea as they tend to severely compromise contrast performance, while reducing colour saturation. So we'd advise using a light grey colour.

Choosing whether to use a matt or gloss finish isn't as straightforward a decision as you might imagine, either. Matt walls can produce a more 'neutral' picture, but can reduce brightness dramatically. Gloss and semi-gloss walls can boost brightness, but due to the unfocused nature of the reflections, can cause annoying amounts of ambient light, as well as highlighting even the slightest imperfections in the wall you're using. And believe us when we say, there's nothing more irksome than being able to see a slight bump, ridge or crack in your wall when watching a film.

If you still want to go the painted wall route, one thing worth investigating is Screen Goo: a highly reflective acrylic 'liquid screen' formulated to reflect and disperse the complex coloured light patterns of video projectors more accurately. The system comprises a special base coat for reflectivity, with a diffusive, colour-correcting topcoat.

You can even get a variety of 'finishes', such as Ultra Black and the apparently 3D-friendly Ultra Silver 3D Topcoat.

Screen Goo 'kits' start at £175.66, which gets you 1000ml base and top coats, a tray, a 2in x 9.5m roll of black Flok tape, two rollers, and one roll handle.

are three aspect ratio options: 4:3, 16:9, and 21:9. For home cinema enthusiasts, the old 'square' 4:3 screen approach is almost certainly a nonstarter these days. Which leaves us with 16:9 or 21:9.

If you intend to watch a lot of HD, you will probably be best off with a 16:9 screen that matches the ratio of HDTV material. **If you're a die-hard movie fan, though, you might consider a 21:9/2.35:1 CinemaScope screen.** After all, most big films now are shot in 2.35:1, and so the majority of Blu-rays are produced with that aspect ratio.

However, the situation isn't totally cut and dried. Blu-rays don't currently hold 'true' 21:9 masters (instead adding black bars within the picture data), and projectors don't have true 21:9 pixel ratios. So if you want a full 21:9 experience, you need a projector with a CinemaScope lens attachment – something which can add considerable cost to your projector setup.

If you really want the ultimate in Cinemascope clarity you could consider a curved screen like Stewart's CineCurve (www.anders-kern.co.uk). These give a more immersive effect, focus light at your viewing position and compensate for the lens distortion you get with anamorphic lenses.

It's curtains for you

The existence of multiple aspect ratios explains another popular option: masking, where absorbent material can cover parts of the screen to change the shape of the visible section. On a basic level, this can be done manually using curtains, although it is quite a faff.

You can also install a motorised curtaining system external to the screen. But by far the most elegant solutions are high-end fixed screens that have motorised masking, where black borders of absorbent material can be electronically moved out from all four edges of the screen. Such screens usually ship with preset aspect ratios

and are selectable using single remote control buttons, but you can usually manually tweak the border locations yourself too.

To be really effective, the movable borders on these sorts of projection panels need to absorb light extremely well. And such screens are generally hugely expensive because of both the motors and tracking mechanisms involved. But they're generally an excellent proposition when built well enough, especially if you regularly watch 21:9 material, but don't want a CinemaScope lens or 21:9 screen.

Is it rocket science?

Choosing the correct size is more complicated than you might think. Aside from the size of your wall you need to consider at what distance from the screen your audience will sit, which is down to personal preference. When people go to the movies some like to be relatively near the front, others prefer the back, while some will only sit the middle. And so it is at home, where people like to have different screen sizes relative to their preferred viewing position.

Screen size also depends to some extent on the quality of your projector and screen. If neither is particularly good, sitting too close will only make you more aware of the shortcomings.

Finally, it's a simple fact that **how large a screen your projector can drive is dependent on the amount of brightness its lamp can produce.** So while 'light cannons' such as Sim2's spectacular C3X Lumis can drive screens many hundreds of inches across, you might find relatively low-brightness projectors struggling to keep images looking punchy over 80-100in.

We mentioned screen material earlier and it's this aspect of screen selection that's the most bewildering yet, potentially, crucial. The first decision you need to make is quite simple: do you



A bright idea: one factor determining the size of your screen should be the brightness of the projector's lamp

want to mount any speakers behind the screen? If so, you'll need an acoustically transparent, perforated fabric that enables sound to pass through without becoming muffled or blocked. Such fabric can cause problems with reduced brightness and back wall light reflections, as light passes through the acoustic holes.

No pain, no gain

After this basic decision, though, life gets more complicated. For a start, you have to get grips with the concept of gain. Some screens are high gain, while others are low, with all sorts of ratings in between, and each gain value has its place. Many white home cinema screens tend to be low gain, with values written as 1.0-1.3.

These gain figures, rather archaically, describe the ratio of light a screen reflects in relation to the amount of light that gets reflected by an untreated magnesium oxide board. So a 1.3 gain screen will reflect around 30 per cent more light than our lovely magnesium oxide white board.

The growing interest in black-level boosting screens that use a grey material rather than white is resulting in gain figures below 1.0 appearing, too.

The question of whether you should get a high or low-gain screen, again boils down to matters of taste and, more importantly, room setup. For instance, **high-gain screens have reduced viewing angles versus low-gain ones, which could be an issue if viewers will have to sit to the side of the screen.** High-gain screens can suffer from hot spots too, where the centre of the image looks brighter than the rest. And finally, high-gain projection panels can damage colour balance, since they don't reflect red, green and blue equally from all viewing angles.

But before you discount them, if there's often a degree of ambient light in your movie room, the high-gain variety could be essential. In fact, a few have been developed now with extreme gain properties, specifically to try and emulate (for a fraction of the cost) the performance of, say, a massive (80in plus) plasma screen in a normal living room environment. A particularly outstanding example of this is the Screen Innovations Black Diamond II (www.anthemavs.co.uk) we tested in issue 183.

Dedicated, blacked out home cinema rooms might be better with more standard-gain screens, though, and possibly even a grey sub-1.0 gain screen. Grey screens were extremely worthwhile a few years ago before projectors started to produce impressive contrasts, but they arguably still have a place even if you've got a good high-contrast projector. If your viewing room is either decorated in light coloured finishes or else houses numerous light furnishings, the way grey screens stop light bouncing around a room could prove very useful.

One final consideration is the issue of the



Follow the curve: for the ultimate 21:9 experience a curved screen cannot be beaten



quality, finish and weave of the screen you buy. We've heard various cynics suggest that expensive screen materials don't really make a difference. But this is just plain wrong. We've seen first-hand how some screens really can produce sharper, more detailed images with HD

than others. Also, some screens can cause a slight moiré effect over areas of fine detail while others don't.

Some screens, as previously discussed, are brighter and more reflective than others, and some are better at reproducing a convincing black colour. Some diffuse light right around your room for wide viewing angles, while others focus it right back at you. Some reproduce colours completely neutrally (and thus accurately), others can introduce an underlying tinge of their own or favour certain tones over others, leading to an unbalanced colour palette.

We're even starting to see screens appearing now that claim to be better for 3D than others. This might seem spurious at first glance, but actually stereoscopic pictures need utter clarity for high levels of detail and really accurate colour toning to become convincing, so we can understand some screens working better with the technology than others. One of the first screens designed and tested with 3D in mind is Image Screen's Cadre 3D (www.image-screens.co.uk).

Finally, the basic quality of the fabric in terms of wear and tear, hanging weight and resilience to rolling, with roll-away projectors, can have a massive impact on long-term viewing.

You would be well advised to get help from custom installation experts before finally settling on a screen. And try to partner your projector with a screen of as much quality as you can afford. After all, unlike a TV, a high quality screen should last you a lifetime ●

Fade to grey (left): off-white screens are effective in light coloured rooms

Masked ball stunner

Image Screens' iMasque becomes **John Archer's** flexible friend

IMasque from Image Screens is handmade to order and can be made to accommodate almost any customer requirement, be it size (up to 12m), screen fabric, gain, masking configuration, 'native' aspect ratio, or even the finish of the framework.

My test frame featured the standard black velvet finish, but other options include a Swarovski design, piano black or completely custom designs (with all RAL colours supported).

The screen material fitted is Image Screen's Nivo Black – a premium fabric that offers a 1.2 gain from the matt-white surface, with a black-coated rear layer to stop any light bouncing off the wall behind it. Typical pricing for a four-way masking Nivo Black iMasque screen is £16,500.

Seven veils

Seven other fabric systems are available. Vevo provides acoustic transparency, in white, grey or black-backed configurations. There's also a grey version of the Nivo, a rear projection option, and finally the Vilo white and grey options, which lose the Nivo's black backing.

As its name suggests, the iMasque features built-in remote controlled motorised masking. This can be two-way, with your choice of horizontal or vertical masking, or four-way, as per our test screen, where you can mask images vertically or horizontally at will.

The frame is made from an extruded aluminium profile, with all motors and cabling pre-installed. What's more, Image Screens has attempted to minimise maintenance issues by designing a unique bi-directional motor control system, to reduce the screen's moving parts.

The remote control offers five different aspect

ratio presets, or can adjust the vertical and horizontal masks manually. The screen can be integrated into RS232 and LAN-based systems.

Partnered with a variety of projectors, including a SIM2 MICO 50, JVC HD550 and Epson TW5500, the iMasque proved stunningly good.

Particularly gorgeous, compared with the more mainstream screens I usually see, was the colour tone. **The iMasque's Nivo fabric produced the most wonderfully neutral colour reproduction I've ever witnessed in my test room.** 'Neutral' might sound boring in other areas of life, but for movies it's the Holy Grail, because it means you're seeing colours exactly as they're supposed to look.

The outstanding colour neutrality also helped colours look more expressive, meaning I could see tonal subtleties I hadn't noticed before.

The chunky black border provided a great defined 'home' for pictures, as well as reducing unwanted 'scattergun' reflections (although these weren't much of a problem anyway, thanks to the fabric's reflective properties and uniformity). I saw no evidence of a hot spot, either, and found the image holding up easily, even from wide angles.

The motorised masking was almost spookily effective during my tests, the only caveat being that the material used looks a fraction lighter than the black frame when running a relatively poor, over-bright projector. This issue all but evaporates, though, using the sort of high-quality projector such a screen will surely be partnered with, leaving you with a wonderfully engineered marvel that seems to love films as much as you do ●

Border control: the screen's wide frame enhances the image by reducing reflections

→ Specifications

Gain: 1.2 (tested) but many other options available, including greys **Mounting options:** Fixed frame **Max size without seam:** 500in diagonal **Also featuring:** Four-way motorised masking, bi-directional motor system, extruded aluminium frame, remote control operation with five predefined aspect ratios or manual adjustment, LAN/RS-232 system control support

HCC VERDICT

Image Screens iMasque
From £8,600 Approx

Highs: Outstanding colour reproduction, contrast and brightness balance; build quality; masking technology
Lows: Masking borders don't absorb all the light from low-contrast projectors; the Nivo Black screen tested here is hardly cheap

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

a class above

With the same innovations as KEF's revolutionary Concept Blade technology showcase, the all-new Q Series from KEF performs like speakers from a higher price class in terms of realism, musicality and off-axis dispersion.

Q Series

All new Uni-Q array.

Sweet, spacious and true, wherever you sit

A large vented tweeter in the centre of the bass/midrange driver, with a 'tangerine' waveguide and unique Z-flex surround to combine unrivalled dispersion with generous travel for the aluminium MF/LF cone.

Advanced bass technologies.

Deeper, tighter and more accurate bass

Inside the fashionably rectilinear cabinets, the new bass driver combines a rigid superlight cone with a massive vented magnet assembly and an oversized voice coil for exceptional sensitivity and distortion-free power handling.

Total system design.

A holistic approach, with no compromises.

These advanced new drivers only need first order crossovers, maximising fluency and transparency, and KEF's legendary attention to detail extends from innovations for easier bi-wiring to environment-friendly finishes.



As Philips enters the 3D arena with a new-look Cinema 21:9 TV and 9000 series LEDs, Mark Craven enjoys an exclusive hands-on with the screens

3D adds another level to 21:9 TV



At the recent IFA technology expo in Berlin, Philips unveiled the second generation of its groundbreaking 21:9 TV and a new range of 9000 series screens, all sporting 3D. However, a week before the world's journalists clapped eyes on the products, HCC enjoyed an exclusive preview, getting up close and personal to the TVs before they were packed up and shipped to the show. What became clear from our briefing was that, while Philips may have come late to the 3D party, it still has the technology to make quite an entrance.



black affair, has been slimmed down and given a brushed matt finish. The low slung speakers have been hidden away, too. Finally, this is a premium product with a premium design to match.

The improvements are, of course, more than skin deep. 2010's 21:9 uses a full array of locally dimmable LEDs to illuminate its panel, where the original was a CCFL device. And then there's the big change: this new screen is 3D-ready.

In use, Philips extended R&D seems to have paid dividends. The Direct LED backlight gives 3D images a good level of brightness, something close to Tack's heart. 'If you don't have light, you can't make a good picture,' he tells me. Crosstalk, too, is reduced, thanks to the localised dimming of the 21:9's multiple LEDs and the 400Hz panel. The backlight is controlled to only illuminate areas of the picture where the pixels have settled. That's the theory anyway; during a run through of a *Toy Story 3* sequence, crosstalk was still apparent. On the other hand, the combination of the 21:9 ratio screen, four-sided Ambilight and Full HD 3D material proves so captivating that you might not even notice.

For many, finding out that the Netherlands' biggest AV brand conducts its R&D in Belgium would come as a shock. But in a squat, drab building in the industrial north of Bruges, its engineers beaver away on new display technology before the screens are assembled elsewhere.

Heading up this operation is Danny Tack, Philips enthusiastic, effervescent technical director. Tack is more than eager to show off the new 2010 range of 3D screens, confident that his brand has outperformed the competition in what is a rapidly developing market.

What's new and different?

Last year's 21:9 TV was a truly innovative product, and stole the Best TV 52in and Over category at the HCC awards. What is immediately apparent is that the second-generation version is much better.

Firstly, it's bigger (a 58in screen rather than a 56in) and benefits from a far more considered design. The bezel, previously quite a thick gloss

Life saving spex

The second-gen 21:9 will sell for around £4,000, with integrated 3D signal emitter and two pairs of glasses. The latter are made in consultation with Xpand. Lightweight and reasonably comfortable (we'd need to spend longer with them to see if they become tiring), their neat touch lies in the fact that there's no on/off button. Instead, the spex take their cue from the TV; they spring into

Feel the width: Philips has increased the size of its Cinema 21:9 screen and improved the design

In Bruges: At Philips' R & D centre (left) Danny Tack (centre) sports Xpand-designed 3D specs as he compares Philips' with rivals models from the likes of Sony, Samsung and LG (right)



30 PHILIPS' LATEST TVs

Tech talk: Vivid mode (left) is the public's favourite; nearly 1,800 LEDs are locally dimmable (centre); Philips is an EISA favourite (right)



life when a 3D signal is active and shut down when the signal stops. This should reduce battery drain on the quoted 270-hour life.

Philips' 3D screens at present eschew any 2D-3D conversion wizardry, something that is becoming a hot topic, especially with Panasonic's recent announcement that it is introducing conversion to its US 3D plasmas. Tack knows this could be an issue: 'Not to have it is a danger – it's a good tick mark. Next year we will do it, but it has to be good quality.'

Another omission from Philips' 21:9 and all its new 2010 panels, is their lack of Freeview HD tuners. **At a time when all its major rivals are packing DVB-T2 chips in their flatpanels, the Philips range remains resolutely SD** where broadcast TV is concerned. However, according to Tina Withington, Philips UK PR manager, this isn't due to any hold up in the supply chain: 'We simply underestimated the take off of Freeview HD in the UK.' Withington doubts whether many consumers really need integrated Freeview HD, pointing to the vast numbers who already have an HD broadcast source. Certainly, at the higher end of the range, we can see her point. Any buyer of the 21:9 or 9000 series would probably already be a subscriber to Sky or Virgin Media. However, at the other end of the spectrum, where Freeview HD has quickly become a major selling point, Philips' TVs may struggle. Chips will be integrated across the range in 2011, however.

The 21:9 represents the pinnacle of Philips' TV range, but the regularly-shaped 9000 Series will also turn heads this year. Alongside being 3D

ready (Philips is adopting the external transmitter/glasses bundle approach for these screens) it boasts the new top-of-the-range Perfect Pixel HD processing engine, 400Hz technology, 1,792 LEDs in 224 segments for local dimming, ISF calibration and a claimed 10,000,000:1 contrast ratio and 0.5ms response time.

Deep inside Philips' Centre of Competence, Danny Tack gave a variety of demos with the 9000 series. He compared his flagship TV with rival models from Samsung, Sharp, LG and Sony (with the latter screen, an 803 model, only arriving at the factory the day before). Interestingly, the demos were conducted with the screens' vivid/dynamic modes and frame rate enhancement tech activated. This is because vivid mode, according to Philips' research, is the one consumers prefer (but certainly not us).

With his range of TVs, Tack showed off the pure processing power of the 9000 series, delivering images and videos that seemed sharper, punchier and better contrasted than its rivals. However, they all looked exaggerated to some degree.

When it comes to artificially tweaking colours, sharpness and frame rates, we have yet to be convinced of the benefit from a home cinema point of view.

A good example of this is what Tack refers to as Philips 'halo-free' Perfect Natural Motion technology. With all the screens running at their highest frame rate modes, he showed how haloing (which occurs when a fast-moving object crosses in front of a detailed background and the processing engine struggles to accurately create the detail in the artificial additional frames) blights all brands. The 9000 was the least affected by artifacting, but it was still noticeable – halo-free doesn't quite live up to its name. Switch off Perfect Natural Motion, though, and the artifacting disappears, only to be replaced by judder. The choice is yours.

Going Dutch

By the time you read this, the IFA show will have come and gone, and we reckon Philips will have made quite an impression. The technological advances of the new-look 21:9 easily make it one of the most desirable flatscreens around and certainly up there with Samsung's 9000 series flagship. The super-charged 16:9 ratio LED TVs, too, appear ready to do battle with their counterparts in the growing 3D sector. The summer months may have belonged to the Japanese and Korean brands, but this winter could be all about Philips ●

See the light: The reinvented Cinema 21:9 screen will be complemented by the new 9000 series of 3D Ambilight screens





ASUS
Inspiring Innovation • Persistent Perfection

Home Entertainment:

Just O!Play It

Play movies, music and photos from your home network.

With the O!Play not only can you play movies, music and photos from your home network, but also browse over 100 internet TV channels, 20,000 internet radio stations, internet photo sharing sites, and get weather updates directly to your TV.

DOLBY
DIGITAL

dts
2.0+Digital Out

Full HD
1080

HDMI

Real
rmvb

Super
Speed N

Supported formats: MPEG1/2/4, RM/RMVB, VC-1, H.264, MP4, MOV, XVID, AVI, DIVX, ASF, WMV, MKV, RM, RMVB, FLV, TS, M2TS, DAT, MPG, VOB, ISO, MP3, WAV, AAC, OGG, FLAC, AIFF, JPEG, BMP, PNG, GIF, TIFF, SRT, SUB, SMI, SSA

• non-wireless version is available



Built-in card reader for easy file sharing



"the great things about the O!Play - it's ability to play HD Content without stalling, HDMI interface, sleek aesthetics and easy to use software interface."

- Overclock3d.net Recommended

COMPUTER SHOPPER
BUDGET BUY

"it's support of DVD menus makes it a good choice if your on a budget."

- Computer Shopper BUDGET BUY

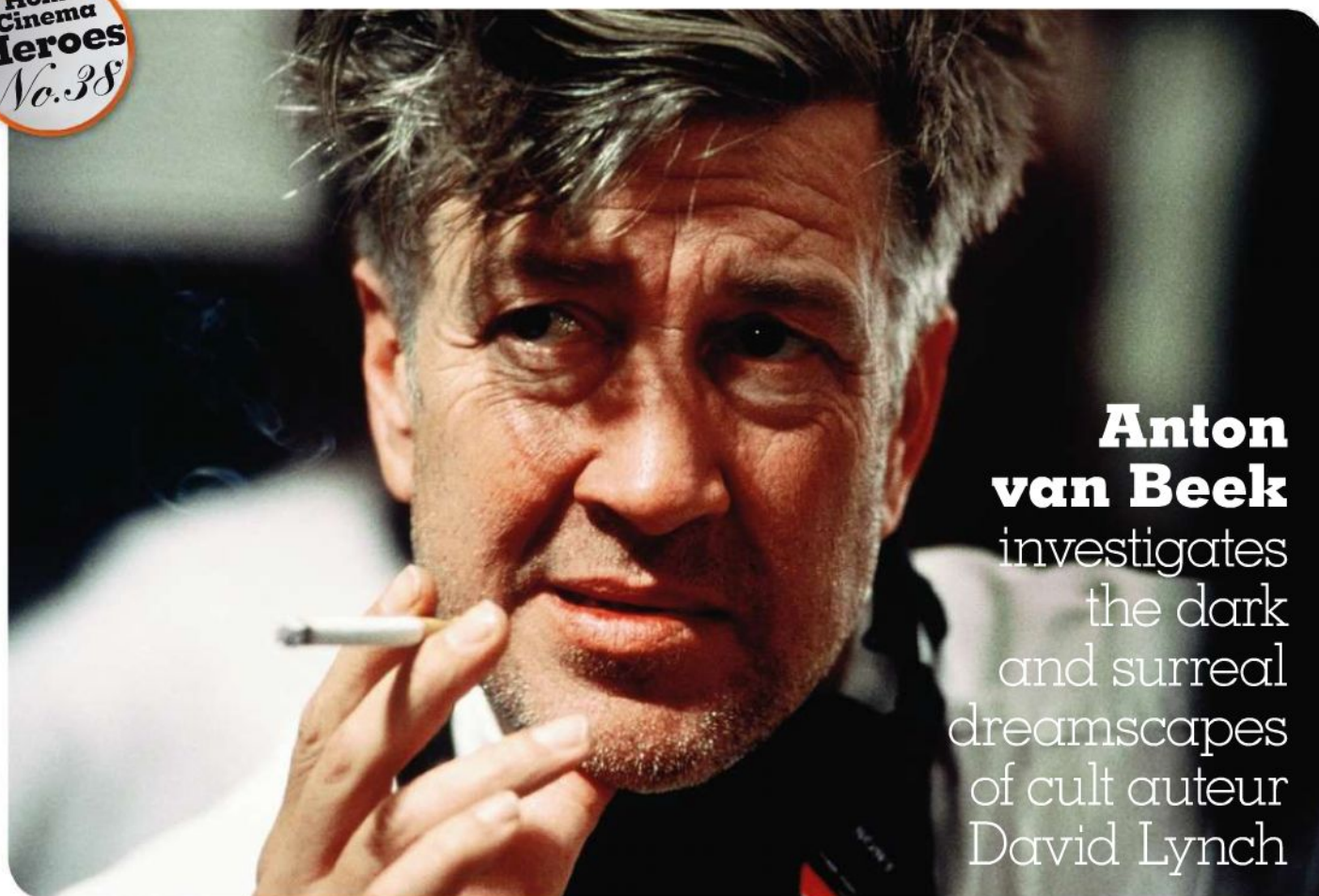
O!PLAY AIR
HD MEDIA PLAYER

amazon.co.uk

ariaPC
TECHNOLOGY

dabs.com

SCAN



Anton van Beek
investigates
the dark
and surreal
dreamscapes
of cult auteur
David Lynch

Small-town weird

FBI Special:

Cool-cut Agent Dale waits for another slice of cherry pie



Cult filmmaker David Lynch once claimed that 'all my movies are about strange worlds that you can't go into, unless you build them and film them. That's what's so important about film to me. I just like going into strange worlds'. And, as anybody who has ever seen any of his extraordinary work will know, he wasn't joking when he talked about alien worlds. While the realities he creates may seem like familiar places we know, before long they become more threatening and nightmarish: a twisted reflection of the world in which we spend our waking lives. And to think, this comes from a man who George Lucas once approached to direct *Return of the Jedi*.

But even if he has never gone entirely 'mainstream', Lynch has often managed to straddle the line between entertainment and art with uncanny ease. Just look at *Blue Velvet*; an early critical and commercial success that established the director's fascination with exploring the dark underbelly of small-town America, is loaded with all of the twisted sex and violence that would also become his trademark.

And then there's the early '90s TV series *Twin Peaks*, which successfully did much the same

thing as a weekly series and was extremely popular (at least up until the point where the network demanded that Lynch reveal the identity of Laura Palmer's killer).

Since then his films have become even more experimental, with the likes of *Mulholland Drive* (reviewed on p92) and *Inland Empire* offering no easy answers to the confused logic of their narratives, and challenging audiences to bring their own meanings to what they are watching. Which is where having them available to re-watch on DVD and Blu-ray comes in so handy.

Craft work

And while he doesn't really care for commentaries or other extra features, Lynch is every bit as meticulous when overseeing the production of a DVD release of his work as he is in actually crafting the films they contain.

From extensively remastered transfers (check out the *Twin Peaks* Gold Box DVD set for a prime example) to astonishing audio mixes, Lynch's discs always manage to coax the very best out of your AV system – which in our eyes is more than enough to justify Lynch a place in the Home Cinema Hero gallery ●

Quintessential David Lynch... Agent Cooper visits the Red Lodge



1 Peak dreamscapes

With its dancing dwarf and 'reverse-speak', this dream sequence from *Twin Peaks* is classic.



2 Red or dead?

An ageing Agent Dale Cooper sits in a red room, while a dwarf in a sharp suit gives him esoteric clues.



3 Doppelgänger

Introducing his cousin with, 'doesn't she look just like Laura Palmer?', the dwarf then gets up to have a dance.



4 The truth is out there

Not-Laura then goes over to Cooper, kisses him on the lips and whispers the identity of Laura's killer.

Must own...



Eraserhead

Scanbox → R2 DVD
£20 Approx

Initially deemed unreleasable by prospective distributors, Lynch's debut feature became a cult hit due to its nightmarish visuals and enigmatic storyline. Mystery still surrounds exactly how Lynch created the mutant baby.

00.09: The film's tone is established from the outset with the ominous industrial noise, which the DVD's 48kHz stereo mix handles extremely well.

47.25: A woman with deformed cheeks shuffles across a stage squashing giant sperm under her feet.



Blue Velvet

Sanctuary → R2 DVD
£10 Approx

The filmmaker began his investigation into the seedy underside of small-town America with this chilling descent into madness and murder.

36.13: Having been discovered spying on Dorothy from her closet, Jeffrey's night gets even weirder when she then seduces him, only to be interrupted by the arrival of the terrifying Frank.

102.59: A final visit to her apartment reveals one of the oddest double-murder scenes you'll ever see, plus a superbly timed shock.



The Elephant Man

Studio Canal Collection → Region A/B BD £25 Approx

Any notion that Lynch couldn't handle emotional content is quickly scuppered by this sensational biopic of so-called Victorian 'human curiosity', Joseph Merrick. You'd need a heart of stone not to be in tears by the end.

39.22: The touching scene where Treves encourages Merrick to break his silence also gives you a great chance to study the astonishing makeup effects.

74.12: Well, it wouldn't be a David Lynch film without at least one nightmarish dream sequence.



Lost Highway

Zentertain Ltd → R2 DVD Special Edition → £20 Approx

A saxophonist is accused of killing his wife; he goes to prison and undergoes a transformation; on his release he starts a relationship with a mobster's mistress who looks just like his dead wife. Really weird and mind-bendingly brilliant.

46.48: The protagonist's change is signified by a thunderous gear shift in the score that assaults the viewer from all corners of the 5.1 soundscape.

60.52: Gangster, Mr Eddy, shows us what he thinks about drivers who tailgate other cars.

Worth seeing...



Wild at Heart

MGM → R1 DVD Special Edition
£9 Approx (US Import)

Based on Barry Gifford's pulp novel, Lynch's twisted road movie is heavy on off-kilter violence and allusions to *The Wizard of Oz*.

03.09: Sailor (Cage) works out some anger issues on the man Lula's (Derr's) mother sent to kill him. Unsurprisingly, the results aren't very pretty.

105.02: Sailor ends up betrayed and with a dud gun during the hold-up, but it's the man responsible, Bobby Peru, who really loses his head during the ensuing shoot-out with the police.



Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me

Zentertain Ltd → R2 DVD
£10 Approx

This cinematic prequel to the TV series tells the story of the last seven days in the life of Laura Palmer. While the subject matter is horrifying and the visuals virtually assault the viewer, the tone is surprisingly compassionate.

02.28: Tonally different from the TV series, as signified by this opening shot of a TV being smashed with a baseball bat as a woman screams.

72.37: The notorious Pink Room scene on this release is optionally subtitled.



The Straight Story

4DVD → R2 DVD
£16 Approx

Lynch ended the last millennium with this family-friendly true story about an old man's six-week journey across the US on a John Deere Lawn Tractor, in order to visit his estranged brother. The only one of his films that Lynch had no hand in writing.

25.48: The anamorphic 2.35:1 transfer really shines, courtesy of this series of stunning rural American landscapes.

58.45: Things get a little too hairy for Alvin when he loses control of his mower on a steep hill.



Dune

Sanctuary → R2 DVD Special Edition
£20 Approx

Lynch accepted an offer from Dino De Laurentiis to helm a blockbuster adaptation of Frank Herbert's sci-fi epic. The film is all over the place and Lynch quickly distanced himself from it.

06.36: The story may be incoherent, but the production design and excellent FX (like this Guild Navigator) ensure that it at least looks spectacular.

97.19: To prove he is ready to lead the Fremen, Paul heads out to the deserts of Arrakis to conquer a massive sandworm. As you do.

It's a family affair



A technically challenging fit-out results in a basement screening room the whole family can use. **Anton van Beek** reports



Kit Checklist

Runco: VX-300d Ultra 1080p DLP projector with Cinewide Rainier 1
Screen Research: THX-certified TheaterCurve Xmask 2.35:1 fixed frame projector screen
Triad: 3x InWall Silver/4 LCR speakers
Triad: 4x InWall Silver/4 Surround speakers
Triad: 2x InWall Bronze/6 PowerSub
Fortress: 8x Matinee motorised cinema seats
Kaleidescape: Kserver-1500 1U Server
Kaleidescape: Kplayer-6000 1080p Player
Kaleidescape: Kplayer-300 1080p Mini Player
Kaleidescape: Kdisk-2000-L 2TB Disk Cartridge
Rotel: RSP-1570 Preamp Processor
Rotel: RMB-1575 Power Amp
Rotel: RB-1572 Power Amp
Audyssey: MultEQ XT Sound Equalizer
Sky: Sky+HD set-top box
Crestron: CP2E control system
Crestron: TPS-6X 6in wi-fi touchpanel
Crestron: iLux CLS-C6 integrated lighting system
Arcam: FMJ T32 DAB/FM tuner
ReQuest: iQ.V5 1TB Intelligent Media Server
ReQuest: 2x iQ.IMA6 Intelligent Multiroom Amplifier

When the owner of a family home in Buckinghamshire discussed with his family exactly what they wanted from their new basement entertainment area, the unanimous decision was a dedicated cinema room with 'proper cinema seating', a 'big screen' and 'at the movies' sound performance.

He approached the professional systems and solutions experts, Smartcomm, asking them to fit with the aesthetic they had in mind for the space in producing something easy enough for the kids to use.

To this end, Smartcomm's team opted for Runco's high-end VX-300d 1080p projector with a Rainier fixed anamorphic lens coupled with a THX-certified screen to deliver truly cinematic visuals from the Kaleidescape and Sky+HD video sources. Meanwhile, 7.2-channel audio fills the room without actually taking up any physical space, thanks to the use of Triad in-wall speakers and subwoofers.

The installers opted to use a Crestron CP2E as the 'brain' of the system, providing effortless control of all of the integrated devices in the room and ensuring easy upgrades when new technologies become available. Actual hands-on control is taken care of by Crestron's wireless TPS-6X touchpanel, which offers full control of the video and audio sources (including the pre-existing multi-room audio solution running throughout the property), as well as full lighting control in the room to guarantee a truly cinematic ambience at all times. And the simple GUI means that both children and parents never have any trouble accessing their favourite movies.

Working closely with the interior designers and joiners throughout the project, Smartcomm's team still had to confront a couple of challenges along the way. Placing the projector in a hub room behind the cinema room meant that a large hole had to be drilled through a solid wall, and optically perfect fire glass had to be carefully installed to ensure there would be no image distortion. Even trickier, though, was working with the irregular trapezoid shape of the room and the mix of flat wooden and angled fabric-covered wall panelling. All these factors meant that speaker, screen and chair locations had to be carefully considered to guarantee the best cinema experience possible.

This fabulous home installation and various others can be found at www.homecinemagallery.com

36 INSTALLS



A Hole in the wall

The Runco projector is housed in an adjacent room, with the image being projected through a hole in the rear wall of the cinema

B Sit back and relax

You won't find seats as comfortable as these eight motorised recliners from Fortress in your local multiplex

C Curved screen

The fixed frame 2.35:1 screen provides a brighter image by bouncing all light back towards the source, thereby eliminating a single 'hot spot'

D Smart sound

Multiroom audio throughout the entire property is handled by the ReQuest 'Intelligent Media Server' and accompanying six-zone multiroom amplifier

E Sky high(-def)

Enjoy your favourite shows and sports with this Sky+HD box

F Touch and go

The Crestron's easy-to-navigate GUI makes control child's play



Living Entertainment

Award Winning Installations by Musical Images

Musical Images is one of the UK's leading retailers and installers of Home Entertainment, Automation, Lighting and Multiroom systems. Recognised with many major magazine and manufacturer awards, Musical Images offers a truly unsurpassed service.



Throughout our long history we've always recognised the importance of superb customer care and technical expertise. That's why our customers know they can rely on us completely, whatever their needs and whatever their budget.

To experience the world of difference an award winning Home Entertainment specialist can make, visit either of our branches today.



www.musical-images.co.uk


Founder Member
Intelligent Homes
in the Making



Musical Images
is a 3 times winner of
Home Cinema Choice
magazine's "Best
Multiroom Installation"

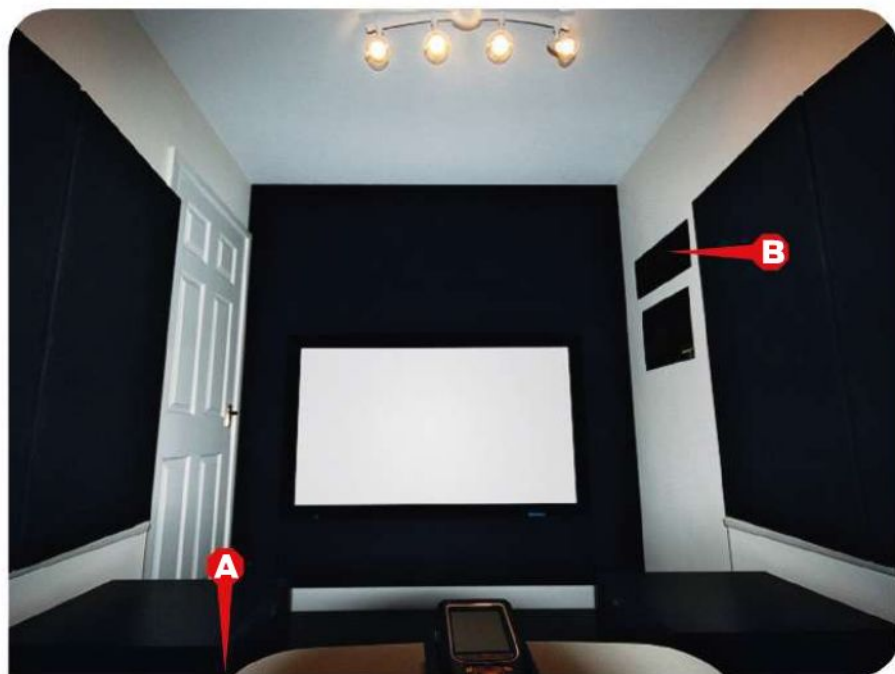
Beckenham Branch: 126 High Street, Beckenham, Kent, BR3 1ED Tel. 020 8663 3777
Edgware Branch: 173 Station Road, Edgware, Middlesex, HA8 7JX Tel. 020 8952 5535

Audio Visual Lifestyle Ltd t/a Musical Images. Please call for opening time details. E-mail: sales@musical-images.co.uk

These photos feature just a small selection of Musical Images' installation work over the past 20 years.

Certified: AV-holic!

Every issue, an **HCC reader** invites you to take a tour of their beloved home cinema setup...



Sent to the garden:
'I am such an AV addict that I ended up studying for a diploma in acoustics'

Introduce yourself...

I'm Andrew Gibson, 31, and I'm an Acoustic Consultant.

And you're an AV-holic?

Yes, definitely; I bought a widescreen Dolby Surround CRT television around 12 years ago, and I've been upgrading my equipment and knowledge ever since. I have even recently converted a spare bedroom into my cinema room.

The acoustics of my cinema room have been a challenge; it only measures 3.6m x 2.2m x 2.4m. I have absorbers and diffusers on the side walls, and absorbers between the speakers on the front wall reduce reflections from the back of the perforated PJ screen. I've equalised the front channels of my system with a third octave equaliser and a sound level meter borrowed from work.

What's in your setup?

A Barco Graphics 808s CRT projector with DVI adaptor; Stewart 60in Luxus Deluxe Screenwall; three Stewart

Cinema Sonic Processors; Onkyo TX-SR876; Lumagen Vision HDQ HD Video Processor; two Denon POA-T10 power amps; Panasonic DMP-BD35 BD deck; Sky HD box; a 5.2 KEF system and much more.

What will be your next equipment purchase?

When my projector eventually fails, I would like to replace it with something like the JVC DLA-HD950. This will also give me room for an extra seat!

How much have you spent on your AV habit over the years?

About £20K in 12 years. eBay is great for second-hand kit.

What's your current fave disc?

Some of my favourite Blu-rays are films that I enjoyed when I was growing up such as *Ghostbusters* and *The Untouchables*. I also enjoyed the showing of the *Star Trek* movies on Channel 4HD.

Are you excited about 3D?

Not at the moment. It would require a lot of expense to upgrade my current setup! ●

Room essentials

A Two's company

Andrew's wife often has a friend over for a movie night. With only two seats in the room, he takes care of projection and ushering duties

B Double bass

Two monster KEF subwoofers (THX-certified 15-inchers) are placed in the centre of either side wall, resulting in a 'reasonably flat frequency response at both listening positions,' says Andrew - and they make good footrests, too, we reckon

C On the source

With a Nintendo Wii, PlayStation 3, Sky HD box, Blu-ray deck and HD DVD player, there's never a shortage of entertainment options

D AV linchpin

This Onkyo TX-SR876 replaced an elderly Denon AVC-A10SE, but the latter brand is still responsible for the two power amps above

Join the club

Do you want to see your home cinema system featured in the pages of *Home Cinema Choice*? If so, log on to www.homecinemachoice.com/avholic where you'll find all the information you need.



BEYOND THE INVISIBLE

Award Winning Luxury Home Cinemas and Multi Room Systems

Control4 LINN

08450 94 93 95
Wimbledon, London
www.beyondtheinvisible.com

FAB RESPONSE INTEGRATION

Multi Award Winning

FAB Audio Visual Ltd
St Albans AL3 6EN
Tel: +44 (0)1727 226 121
www.fabav.co.uk

HOME CINEMA AUDIO LIGHTING INTEGRATION



To advertise
here please call
Richard Jewels
on
0207 042 4265

HOME CINEMA
Installer of the Year 2009 WINNER

CEDIA AWARDS 2009
BEST HOME CINEMA WINNER

Winner of the UK's most prestigious home cinema awards 2009

FINITE SOLUTIONS
HOME ENTERTAINMENT SPECIALISTS

- Fully project managed build
- In house 3D design service
- CEDIA qualified Designers and Installers
- Award winning showhouse with 4 cinema demo rooms

View over 30 completed projects and our showroom cinemas on our website www.finitesolutions.co.uk

Maida Vale, London
0845 873 8848
london@finitesolutions.co.uk

Leeds, West Yorkshire
0113 255 4765
leeds@finitesolutions.co.uk

INTEGRATION AWARDS 2008

SOUND ACADEMY

SOUND & VISION CENTER

Demonstration Studios
Cinema Theatre
Home Installation
Multiroom Specialists
In House Service Dept
Mail Order Available

152 High Street, Bloxwich, Walsall
01922 493499 Late Night Thursday
www.soundacademy.co.uk

progressive audiovisual

NEW website online now!!

Complete home control in the palm of your hand

Home Automation · Multi-Room · Home Cinema

isf 01892 860801
THX www.progressive-av.com
covering London and the South East

Oranges & Lemons

Hi-Fi, Home Cinema & Multi-Room Specialists

020 7924 2040

Email: oranges.lemons@virgin.net
61 Webb's Road, Battersea, SW11 6RX
www.oandlhifi.co.uk

BADA





Gadget Awards 2010

OFFICIAL AWARDS PARTNERS



What will YOU choose?

From smartphones to satnavs to tablet computers,
vote for your pick of the year's hottest kit
in the **T3** Gadget Awards 2010

**The shortlist is now open – vote for your favourites
and win £2,000 worth of must-have tech**



Vote now
and win a
MacBook Pro,
HTC Legend
and much
more

Vote now at www.T3.com/awards

OFFICIAL MEDIA PARTNERS



REVIEWS

→ **Hardware highlights** PANASONIC TX-L42D25B LED TV
 MARANTZ SR7005 flagship AV receiver LG 50PK990 plasma SAMSUNG LE46C750 3D TV
 PIONEER BDP-LX53 videophile Blu-ray deck HUMAX HDR-FOX T2 Freeview HD PVR
 GROUP TEST Blu-ray home cinema systems VIVADI MEDIAMASTER MM320 media PC/BD deck

Love me slender

These attractive Crystal Acoustics bipolar floorstanders are just the ticket for delivering convincing cinema sounds to a mid-sized room. Discover why on p54

HCC Ratings key

Outstanding	1 2 3 4 5
Above average	1 2 3 4 5
Acceptable	1 2 3 4 5
Disappointing	1 2 3 4 5
Dire	1 2 3 4 5

HCC DOESN'T BELIEVE IN OVER-PRAISING HARDWARE. CONSEQUENTLY, A THREE-STAR RATING SHOULDN'T BE CONSIDERED A BAD RESULT – IT SIMPLY MEANS THAT A PRODUCT PERFORMS ACCORDING TO ITS CATEGORY POSITION. A FIVE-STAR RATING IS ONLY AWARDED IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Marantz reloaded

With the SR7005 Marantz has shaken off its reputation for staid amp performance and is now a home cinema supremo, as **Richard Stevenson** discovers

I confess that I have never really been excited by Marantz's AV receivers. They were never ahead of the features game and always aired too much on the side of sonic caution for my liking. Safe, reliable, solid and about as exciting as endurance snail racing. When the SR7005 arrived I brewed a really fresh cup of Horlicks, put my slippers on and settled down for an evening of light entertainment.

I should have known something was different the moment the SR7005's curvy-sided fascia came out of the box, like Angelina Jolie emerging from the lake in *Beowulf*. Based on the successful styling of Marantz's high end hi-fi equipment, this multichannel receiver is utterly gorgeous. The curves in all the right places, different fascia textures, brushed knobs and that unique circular display make our previous favourite super-models from Pioneer look as if they have had a good thrashing with the ugly stick.

And just when you are thinking that the display window is going to prove a little petite for comprehensive menu display, you drop down the front flap to reveal a bigger main display. That is so cool.

And then there is the features list. **No longer the stripped down, audiophile device of previous Marantz receivers, the SR7005 is right up there at the cutting edge of AV tech.** Based on the latest generation 32-bit SHARC processor from Analog Devices, it handles all the regular HD audio formats as well as Audyssey MultEQ XT room EQ, Audyssey DSX height/width processing and Dolby Pro-Logic IIz

height channels. It remains a seven-channel amp, which means running height or width channels will require binning rear-back speakers, but at a claimed 125W per channel who is complaining?

Very much a network-ready receiver, the SR7005 offers a dedicated iPod/Phone input, IP addressable and web-access interface and Marantz's bespoke M-Xport interface to hook up to its optional RX1010 Bluetooth module. The networking side is hardwired Ethernet with vTuner net radio and direct access to your Napster and Last.FM accounts.

Apps to go... soon

In development and, alas, not available for this review is a seductive iPhone/Touch app that will control the SR7005 from your Apple device – ideal for when the dog has eaten the relatively mundane remote handset supplied. The 6-in 2-out HDMI connections all have 3D compatible V1.4a spec, and there is an Anchor Bay upscaler to work some hi-def magic into your SD DVD collection and video material.

Under the hood, Marantz has gone to town to ensure the SR7005 shakes off the older, rather sedate sound and can drive an action movie as fast, if not faster, than any competing device. The power amplifiers are a current feedback circuit with a whopping transformer power supply for high current on demand. There are a bunch of hand-selected components that would make the most anorak-wearing of hi-fi aficionados nod appreciatively. Much attention has been lavished on separate power

AV/CV

Product:
All new, fully featured AV receiver

Positioning:
On its own at the top of Marantz receiver range

Peers:
Denon AVR-4310,
Onkyo TX-NR5007



More seductive than a date with Betty Draper and likewise guaranteed to drive you mad with excitement



→ Specifications

Dolby True HD: YES and Dolby Pro-Logic IIz
 DTS HD Master Audio: YES and DTS ES 6.1 Discrete
 THX: NO and no loss here
 Universal Remote: YES, with iPhone app to follow!
 Zone 2 Remote: NO see iPhone app
 Multi-channel input: YES, 7.1 RCA
 Multi-channel output: YES, 7.2 RCA
 Multi-room: YES, main + 1 zones
 Phono-stage: YES
 AV inputs: YES 5x composite & RCA audio
 HDMI Switching: YES 6-in 2-out (one front loader), V1.4a
 HDMI audio: YES PCM and bitstream
 Video upscaling: YES to 1080p
 Component video: YES 4-in, 2-out
 iPod dock: YES via USB
 Networking: YES, wired Ethernet, IP, Bluetooth option
 USB reader: YES, WMA, MP3, FLAC and WAV
 Room EQ: YES Audyssey Mult-EQ
 Auto set-up: YES with mic supplied
 Headphone: YES
 Amplification: 7 x 125W claimed
 Tuner: FM/AM, vTuner, Napster, last.FM
 Dimensions: 440(w) x 185(h) x 406(d)mm
 Weight: 13.2Kg
 Also featuring: Audyssey DSX, iPhone/iPod Touch control app available soon; M-Xport for Bluetooth comms; re-introduced MM phono stage; 3D compatible HDMI, audio return channel, DLNA 1.5 certified, current feedback amplifiers, twin displays. IR and 12v triggers



44 REVIEWS

supplies for each key audio section and extensive internal shielding to avoid electrical interference. There's also a Pure Direct mode that closes down all superfluous circuits and features, such as the display.

The SR7005 is a whole lot of receiver for the money and, in technology and features alone, has leapfrogged forward to join the leading pack. Back this up with Marantz's audiophile expertise and this receiver has the potential to be a real winner. So where's the catch? Frankly, there isn't one; well, not a major one anyway. Yes, the build quality could be a little better as the main knobs wobble like weebles with vertigo at the lightest sideway push, and the speaker terminals are rather budget binding posts for a 1.5 kilo-pound amp. Hey-ho.

Belt up for take-off

Horlicks is a bitch to wipe off of the ceiling. Having run the SR7005's Audyssey auto set-up and EQ system, accessed from its slick and easy GUI, I settled down with *Serenity*

on Blu-Ray. Skipping to the chapter where the ship emerges from the ion cloud straight into a huge space battle between the alliance and the reavers, was something of a shock. No longer the restrained Marantz performer of old, this beast reaches deep into electronic soul and pulls out wave after wave of thunderous action, set against a huge soundstage, as well as bass effects so powerful that they threatened the very fabric of the building.

The opening onslaught of missiles exploded with epic scale, causing my room's glass light fitting to vibrate like a demented alarm clock. Very few receivers without separate box power amps manage that and the Marantz's feed to the sub is as prodigious as it is tight. Strenuous, this is a receiver with a real passion for the adrenaline-fuelled side of home movie entertainment! The ship's crash landing is an epic, whirling maelstrom of sonic action, with every effect projected well out into the room and perfectly defined. It's not merely the wall of sound that lesser amps manage to produce, but finely



Through the round window: is a much larger display, revealed by dropping down the hinged panel

Connections

A Component king

A surfeit of inputs for video switching any legacy kit clinging to hi-def analogue component video

B Blue in the tooth

The bespoke M-Xport interface lets you hook up to its optional RX1010 Bluetooth module

C Last resort

The hardwired Ethernet jack is your gateway to network services such as Napster and Last.FM

D Analogue alternative

The SR7005 will happily handle a decoded 7.1 channel feed from a Blu-ray deck

E HDMI maestro

All six HDMI inputs and both outputs are v1.4a and provide plenty of HD and 3D connectivity options

F What a bind

The plastic binding posts used for speaker terminals aren't of the highest build quality



orchestrated sound effects that send the pulse racing.

Taming the beast

When the light fitting threatened to detach itself from the ceiling, I decided I had to manually fine-tune the SR7005's bass management to tame the LFE output a little and thereby keep the house in one piece. Simply put, the main volume on my Velodyne DD18 was set too high and the Marantz, like all Audyssey-based receivers, didn't have the latitude to auto-reduce the sub output enough in relation to the main speakers.

Its max cut of -12dB was applied to the sub, but due to very efficient speakers and Audyssey trying to deliver a reference 80dB level, it was also cutting the main speakers by anything from -9dB to -12dB. While this did mean I had to trim the Velodyne back manually, it didn't stop the SR7005 banging out big low frequency effects with the impact and tautness of an amp of three or four times its price!

The SR7005 is the best Marantz AV receiver to date. It is passionate,

detailed and powerful, and really digs deep into the recording to extract every last bit of information on the disc. With the more sedate parts of *Serenity*, such as its excellent dialogue and interesting character interactions, you can't help but be impressed with the Marantz's attention to detail and big, upfront approach. Yet move to more intense drama like *Girl With The Dragon Tattoo* and SR7005 simply finds new reserves of depth and atmosphere.

It can sound as moody as it is feisty and as intense as it is ebullient, perfectly matching its pace and balance to the movie.

This is no one-genre wonder, but a genuine all-rounder as happy with *The Hurt Locker* as it is with *Toy Story*.

But the SR7005's best trick is actually its own disappearing act. With most movies you won't find yourself listening to the amp or even your speakers. Instead you will find yourself deep within the film, being immersed in the full cinematic effect as the director intended – and that is the best home cinema you can get! ●

→ Tech Labs

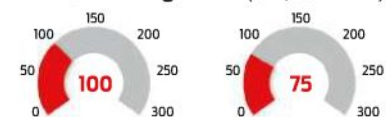
Power consumption: Watts



Idling: this result shows just how power-greedy this amp is

Powered: This is a hefty amount for an AV amp specified at 125W per channel

Power ratings: Watts (8Ω, 0.5% THD)



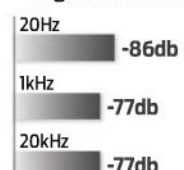
2-channel 8Ω: Marantz states 125W at 0.08% THD, is plausible if one channel driven, but not likely

5-channel 8Ω: This amp is definitely designed for multi-channel over two-channel playback. Performance was better with 7 channels

Untainted: Watts



Signal/noise: db



Fidelity firewall: A measurement of power untainted by distortion (0.05THD, 8Ω, 1kHz), this is an average result that's good for the money

S/N tests: Good results, but they don't meet the THX standard of 85dB



HCC VERDICT

Marantz SR7005
£1,400 Approx

Highs: Superb detail; a movie lover's dream amp; great value
Lows: External build quality; lack of 9-channel output; absence of THX

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

So nearly an LG legend

John Archer finds a lot to like about this 50in plasma TV – and a couple of flaws, too

Proof of just how seriously LG is still taking plasma is abundantly clear in the brand's latest flagship TV, the 50PK990. Thanks to its slim frame, single-layer finish and novel colour scheme, which subtly infuses a touch of blue into the stand and bezel, it certainly cuts a dash.

Doing more to establish the set's significance as a flagship product are its connections. Four HDMI inputs get the ball rolling, and there's excellent support from a couple of USB inputs, a dedicated analogue PC socket, an Ethernet port and an RS232 port that enables wider system integration.

The USBs and Ethernet port are strikingly flexible, too. The former enable you to play JPEGs, MP3 music files and video formats including DivX HD and introduce a wi-fi USB dongle that ships with the TV.

The Ethernet port is there partly because it has to accompany the screen's built-in Freeview HD tuner, while also enabling you to stream in files from a DLNA PC, as well as granting access to LG's new NetCast online TV service.

Portrait of a portal

It's a pity then, that at the time of writing LG's online portal is basic in the extreme. All you get is YouTube, the Picasa photo storage site, and rudimentary weather-checking facilities courtesy of AccuWeather.

Rather more comprehensive are the 50PK990's picture adjustment options. The Imaging Science Foundation (ISF) only awards its endorsements to TVs that it regards as flexible enough for professional calibration and this one fits the bill.

There's a reasonably flexible colour management tool and

gamma adjustment alongside the usual tweaks. There's also a startlingly extensive suite of picture processing options designed to boost motion handling, contrast, noise levels and colour gamut.

If you don't want to pay the ISF to fine-tune your picture settings for you, an easier option is LG's Picture Wizard tool, which guides you through the key set-up options using a selection of test signals.

The ISF isn't the only independent organisation that's backing the 50PK990. For it's also got a THX preset, pre-calibrated to deliver a certifiable picture good enough to meet its tough image quality criteria.

And for the most part, we fully concur with THX's trust in the set. For instance, during the playback of *30 Days of Night* on Blu-ray and a couple of missions on *Left 4 Dead 2* on the Xbox 360, **the TV's black level response is consistently excellent**, with the screen reproducing much deeper, richer and more natural blacks than LG's previous plasma generation. In fact, their profundity only fall marginally short of those on Panasonic's latest G20, V20 and VT20 plasma models, which set a high standard.

A positive contribution to the 50PK990's black level prowess comes from an integral TruBlack screen filter that reduces the impact reflections and glare have on images.

Making dark hues look all the more intense, meanwhile, is the TV's exceptionally potent colour reproduction – commonly a slight weakness of plasma technology. During *30 Days of Night*'s rare bright moments, however, colours look as vibrant and aggressive as those of LG's best LCD/LED TVs.

AV/CV

Product:
50in plasma with THX and ISF endorsement

Positioning:
In LG's top tier of PDPs. The step-down PK790 range lacks the USB wi-fi dongle and TruBlack filter

Peers:
Panasonic TX-P50G20;
Samsung PS50A756

Tough image:
The LG's THX preset is where you should head for cinematic pictures



→ Specifications

3D: NO **HD Ready:** YES With 1080p/24 support

Tuner: YES Freeview HD

Component: YES 1 **HDMI:** YES 4 HDMI inputs

PC input: YES 1 D-Sub **Resolution:** 1920 x 1080

Sound: 20W

Brightness (claimed): N/A

Contrast ratio (claimed): 3,000,000:1

Dimensions: 1184(w) x 739(h) x 52(d)mm **Weight:** 30.2kg

Also featuring: 600Hz processing; MPEG noise reduction; TruBlack filter design; Bluetooth support; NetCast online features; intelligent sensor technology; Energy Saving recommended; built-in picture wizard; colour management; wide colour gamut option



Seal of approval:

Colours remain true and bold, even if you are viewing from an angle



The bold colours have been achieved without compromising tonal naturalism and blend subtlety. And they are pretty much immune to the often severe viewing angle limitations associated with LCD TVs.

Meanwhile, the unnaturally rapid movement of *30 Days'* vampires, along with the near-constant flurry of zombies in *Left 4 Dead 2*, both provide ample evidence of how good the screen's motion handling is. Its 600Hz sub-field drive engine helps motion-packed scenes avoid judder and smearing. You can cause the odd processing side effect if you set the noise reduction and motion handling circuitry too high, but overall the processing package's plus points far outweigh the negatives.

Sharp implement

The 50PK990 delivers some impressively detailed pictures from our two HD test sources. And it does so without the slightly gritty look that sometimes appears with HD plasma pictures (provided, at least, that you don't activate the set's flawed Edge Enhancement option, or ramp the Sharpness higher than level 50).

Upscaling of standard-def sources is far better than LG's previous plasma range, and both Sky News and *Pirates of The Caribbean* on DVD translate to the screen's full HD resolution much more crisply than expected. Noise, too, is better suppressed, and while there are more rogue colour tones in evidence with standard-def feeds than HD ones, they're nothing like as rife as they were last year.

While the 50PK990 is good enough to finally put LG's plasma screens on the map alongside its established LCD TVs, it won't be challenging Panasonic's dominance

of the sector, because it suffers from a couple of undeniable flaws.

The worst of these involves image retention, where **bright parts of pictures can leave ghostly shadows behind** after they're supposed to have disappeared. This isn't to be confused with screen burn; I haven't seen evidence to suggest that the shadows could become permanent. But the spectral remnants of pictures can linger on for quite a few seconds, and that's enough to be distracting, especially when a source skips from a bright scene to a dark one.

Time was when all plasma TVs used to suffer from a degree of image retention, requiring you to be extra vigilant regarding logos and other long-term stationary image features for the first 100hrs or so of the TV's life. But Samsung and Panasonic have all but removed the phenomenon from their screens now, so it's hard to comprehend why LG is lagging so far behind. Even having to tolerate it for the first 100hrs or so seems wholly unnecessary today.

Another careless problem that undermines the 50PK990's extensive good work is a curious streaking effect, whereby shadowy stripes sometimes extend across the screen from the right-hand sides of particularly bright objects. Stranger still, I only noticed this when playing games from the Xbox 360 console. But really, it shouldn't happen at all.

Turning attention to the 50PK990's audio, I was quite pleased by its open, decently powerful soundstage and the way it doesn't start to sound thin and cramped during a full-tilt action sequence. But the set does suffer a bit from the lack of deep bass that's so prevalent in the flat TV world

→ Tech Labs**Power consumption: Watts**

White screen: Reading taken with energy-save off, but none of the power saver modes make much difference

Test footage: With movie footage, consumption averages around 260W

TV Contrast: Ratio**Colour accuracy**

Picture: An impressive real-world contrast figure, although brightness (12.5fL) is low. If you want the best from this set, view in a darkened room

Presets: Unusually, white balance can be adjusted continuously between 'cold' and 'warm' (50 steps either way). W26 is the closest to 6,500K (6600K measured). There's also an ISF Expert mode with comprehensive colour-management parameters
Cool end: 12,700K
Medium: 8,800K
Warm end: 5,800K

**HCC VERDICT**

LG 50PK990
£1,300 Approx

Highs: Styling; superb value; pictures are excellent in many ways
Lows: Annoying image retention and streaking artefacts; limited online functions

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

Supportive



OmniMount is behind your flat panel – and you

With over 30 years experience, you can trust that OmniMount is the best mounting solution for your panel – and the best brand choice for you. From the smallest speaker to the largest flat panel and everything in between, OmniMount products maximize the home cinema experience. Plus we are dedicated to providing the highest level of customer support making us a brand you can believe in. Want to find out more? Visit omnimount.com anytime.



Flat Panel
Mounts



Home Cinema
Furniture



Speaker Stands
& Mounts



Wall
Furniture



Rack
Systems



Projector
Mounts

OmniMount is a registered
trademark of OmniMount
Systems, Inc. ©2010

Powerhouse PVR

As **Adrian Justins** discovers, Humax raises the bar for Freeview+ HD recorders with a box that puts pleasure back into watching the platform

Of the half dozen or so Freeview+ HD PVRs that have beaten the HDR-FOX T2 to market, none have managed to successfully blend form with function. The designers of the coolest looking boxes are often guilty of crimes against home cinema such as not providing an LED display, not including Dolby Digital 5.1 decoding or creating complex menu systems that are harder to navigate than the Somali coast.

The HDR-FOX T2 looks far more promising, though. The box is stylish and well built, plus it has a fascia that boasts a superior LED display that clearly spells channel names and functions in a legible font. A central power button faintly glows blue around its circumference when in

standby and brightly when switched on. The light changes to red when a recording is taking place. So form follows function.

Connectivity includes back and front USBs, a digital optical audio output and a CI slot for access to Top-Up TV. That optical audio socket is the first one I've come across to actually output Dolby Digital, offering the chance to enjoy 5.1 surround sound. Most boxes can't transcode to DD from AAC (which is used to carry audio description metadata).

More buttons than panto

The remote control is a bit of a let-down, though, as it looks great, but several of the buttons and labels are either too small or too cramped. On the other hand, squeezing

AV/CV

Product:
Freeview+
HD PVR

Positioning:
Only Freeview
HD recorder
available

Peers:
Sagemcom
RT190-320 T2
HD; 3View
3VHD; Philips
HDT 8520

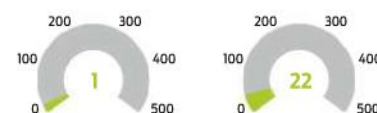
buttons on to the remote helps to simplify the menu system, so that, for example, you can add bookmarks or select favourite channels on the fly.

The HDR-FOX T2 is one of the very few Freeview+ HD PVRs with multimedia capabilities. It can act as a client in a wired network or playback photos, videos and music files stored on a USB flash drive. These can also be copied over to the 500GB hard disk, a process that's simplified by an automatic onscreen prompt. File compatibility is fairly broad, comprising JPEGs, MP3s and most movie codecs accept MKV, but such systems are notoriously flaky. I did not have 100 per cent success despite trying two review samples with some files randomly playing on one or other box.



→ Tech Labs

Power consumption: Watts



Idling: Negligible juice usage is good for an item left in standby

Playing: Nothing that will impact your carbon footprint unduly

More positively, the HDR-FOX T2 is expected to enjoy Video on Demand later in the year, with the BBC's iPlayer and Sky Player joining the PVR party courtesy of a software update. For now, the box's non-Freeview talents are restricted to multimedia file playback from USB or DLNA compliant devices connected over a wired network.

Appetising menu

Designing attractive menu systems is one of Humax's current strengths, made ever easier by some of the unappealing stuff served up by rivals such as Sagemcom and 3View. The fonts, graphics and adjustable translucency of the HDR-FOX T2's menu combine wonderfully with a logical and easy-to-navigate system. Setting up and installing is a breeze, although the optical audio socket on both test boxes proved physically resistant to my selection of optical cables. No such trouble with the HDMI, which will happily output video scaled all the way up to 1080p.

A poorly implemented EPG is a common problem on Freeview boxes, some of which fail to maintain a visual and/or aural connection with the live broadcast. Not so here as **Humax takes the miniature window route that keeps full audio and picture running.** The eight-day EPG

displays seven channels in grid form with two hours' worth of programmes, or you can skip ahead or back by 24 hours via buttons on the remote. Navigation is versatile as you can search by genre or keyword (eg title) or you can choose to filter the EPG to show just TV, radio, HD-only or recent channels.

Pressing OK lets you record the show (or an entire series) or set a reminder. Manual padding (up to 10 minutes at the start and end) can be done from the set-up menu.

Helpfully, the EPG tells you if a show on a standard-definition channel is also showing in HD but not if HD content is native 1080i or upscaled from standard definition. This should be revealed within the programme information pane.

When watching a show, you can call up the info banner, which can scroll through the entire EPG rather than the usual Now and Next limit.

It's not Humax's fault so many low bitrate channels look rubbish, but at least you can be assured of getting the best possible pictures and sound going with the HDR-FOX T2's excellent tuners and recorder. Native HD shows look simply top-notch and are on a par with those found on Freesat and Sky HD. This box makes watching live TV and recordings as enjoyable as can be expected from the Freeview service ●

Fair to view: the external design is stylish and well built



→ Specifications

HDD/PVR: YES 500GB

Tuner: YES Dual T2

HDMI: YES 1

Component output: NO

Digital audio output: YES optical

Phono audio output: YES 1

Dimensions: 380(w) x 252(d)

x 55(h)mm

Weight: 2.8kg

Also featuring: 8-day EPG; series linking; CI slot; Ethernet; 2 x USB (front and rear); Scart; composite video out; RF loopthrough; media streaming (XviD, MP3, JPEG); Dolby Digital output; upscales to 1080p; VoD services via update due by end of year



HCC VERDICT

Humax HDR-FOX T2
£330 Approx

Highs: Ease of use; multimedia storage; Dolby Digital surround

Lows: Can't trim recordings; bit pricey

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5



Thrills without frills

What this costly deck lacks in features, it more than makes up for on picture and sound performance, especially for Pioneer fans, says **Jim Hill**

Pioneer's pricey player offers none of the niceties that brands use to lure us to the next price point. Instead of 3D, wi-fi, universal playback or even a set of multichannel outputs, this step-up player trades purely on performance. It's a high-risk strategy, given the impressive quality of this year's budget offerings. Lucky then, that the picture quality is spanking.

It's the first deck we've reviewed for a while where the list of things it can't do actually eclipses the feature set. However, it is also the first to offer its own iPhone application. iControlAV is a free download from the iTunes Store and it works a treat, giving you convenient touchscreen access to even the more complex menu settings.

In other respects, this machine is a regular player of plastic construction, but of a reasonably high standard with crisp styling. Pioneer's dual layer

chassis and rubber feet provide the disc mechanism with a good stable platform. There's a USB port at the front and another at the back along with minimal connections.

At this price it's unusual not to see the Super Audio CD and DVD-Audio logos along with a full set of multichannel outputs. The two formats are all but extinct, but it's still a blow for anyone with a back catalogue. It's also a surprising move from the brand that was among the first to market a universal player and is touting this as an audiophile machine. At least the high-resolution movie formats, Dolby TrueHD and DTS-HD Master Audio, are present and correct.

The A to B of web apps

Pioneer has introduced two web applications with this player in the shape of YouTube and an RSS feed. The former adds some amusing clips,

AV/CV

Product:
Blu-ray player

Positioning:
Mid-range performance player aimed at audiophiles

Peers:
Sony BDP-S570;
Pioneer BDP-LX52

but it's slow to open and, frankly, it just highlights how slow the manufacturer is to match rivals with its online offerings.

Finally we come to Blu-ray, which is this deck's *raison d'être* and the news is nearly all good performance-wise. However, you will need to exercise some patience before operating this deck, as it takes an age to load and play a Blu-ray, and the noisy mechanism makes a meal of navigating through the chapters. The stubborn operating system insists that you close the disc drawer before pressing play and that you press stop during playback, sometimes twice, before you are allowed to go to the home page.

The main menu page is an improvement on last year's models, but still rudimentary compared with other brands. What does inspire confidence in the picture quality is the jet black splash screen and

→ Tech Labs

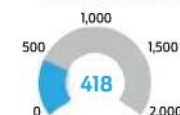
Power consumption: Watts



Idling: With disc in but doing nothing
A good result

Playing: One of the most efficient so far

Audio Jitter: Ps



Analogue:
A reasonable figure, but not quite in the audiophile class

Loading: Boot/Java

Boot speed & tray eject
20s

Tray in to main BD menu
84s

Disc loading & Java:
One of the slowest players of the current crop

→ Specifications

- 3D:** No
Video upscaling: Yes, all resolutions up to 1080p
Multiregion: No, Region B for BD and 2 for DVD
HDMI: Yes, version 1.3c
Component: Yes, for older systems
Digital Audio out: Yes, optical and coaxial outputs
Multichannel audio out: No, just stereo analogue outputs
DVD-A/SACD: No, neither of the audiophile formats are supported
USB: Yes, front port for HDD connection
Dolby True HD/DTS HD decoding: Yes
Dolby True HD/DTS HD bitstream: Yes
Profile 2.0: Yes
Dimensions: 420(w) x 72(h) x 228(d) mm
Weight: 3.3kg
Features: BD-Live for accessing online content; YouTube and RSS feeds; 36-bit Deep Colour; PQLS Multichannel Surround (bitstream); iPhone remote; x.v.Colour compatible



razor-sharp Pioneer logo. Sure enough, when you play a Blu-ray and output a 1080p signal at 24fps into a screen, it's hard not to be impressed by the glossy, vivid colours and eye-popping detail.

Where the budget machines struggle to show consistently sharp lines of delineation during motion sequences, the Pioneer holds them together with ease, maintaining straight and even edges throughout.

It also has the bold, consistent colours and dark black levels of a premium player. It is x.v.Colour compliant as well as offering 36-bit Deep Colour processing for similarly specified displays. Look at any blue sky scene and there's virtually no fizz or grain to spoil the view.

Using 2012 as a test Blu-ray disc, we were best able to appreciate the level of detail on offer in the supermarket scene in Chapter six. Looking over the shoulders of the actors, we could read not just the brand names of all the products on the shelves, but the prices, too. So we have to assume that Huggies and Kelloggs did pay for their product placements! During the ensuing earthquake chase scene, we were equally as impressed with the lack of any breakup in the image.

DVDs also benefit from the smooth imagery with some very convincing video upscaling. In short, your standard-def DVDs will look significantly less mushy on this machine than on a budget rival.

Don't look back: Dolby TrueHD and DTS-HD Master Audio fill the void left by audiophile favourites SACD and DVD-A

Sound sensation

Pioneer Blu-ray players usually sound rather good, too, and this one comes with gold-plated connectors, including the HDMI port, an upgraded power supply and Precision Quartz Lock System (PQLS). The latter only comes into play if you are using a Pioneer amp. It effectively reduces audio jitter to almost zero, thereby enhancing the sound, and providing a compelling reason for having all Pioneer kit, if you already own one of the brand's excellent receivers. With a regular amp, in this case a Denon AVR-4810, it sounded clear and open enough through both the analogue outputs and the HDMI output. High-resolution movie soundtracks sound particularly dynamic.

Many Blu-ray players these days fancy themselves as multimedia hubs offering web content, data streaming and USB interfacing. Pioneer has scaled down its media sharing claims and rightly so. Yes, it can read MP3s and JPEGs from an external drive, but not very well. It skipped a few songs and crashed on a photo when I tried it. But then just plugging the drive straight into an amp or TV is a better option anyway.

The LX53 is a perplexing player. It's the brand's flagship, but it lacks the premium build quality of an audiophile deck and the extra features we would expect from a step-up deck. Near perfect picture quality is its trump card, and for a Blu-ray player, that's a very strong card to play.



HCC VERDICT

Pioneer BDP-LX53
£400 Approx

Highs: Vivid colours and dense detail with Blu-ray; good upscaling; great iPhone app available

Lows: No 3D or universal playback; slow disc mechanism; poor online offering; basic operating system

Picture: 1 2 3 4 5

Sound: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

Bipolar expedition

Adam Rayner's golden ears revel in the wide sound field delivered by these flatscreen-friendly floorstanders

AV/CV

Product:
5.1 designer
system with
bipolar
technology

Position:
At the bottom
of Crystal
Acoustics'
floorstanding
range

Peers:
KEF C series;
Mordaunt-
Short
Alumni 5.1;
Tannoy Arena
Lite

This system
is designed
to match your
flatpanel TV

In my time, I have reviewed some monstrous speakers. Whether this is as a result of my golden ears, or because I am big and ugly and can unpack big soundboxes, is moot. Some of the largest and most luxurious have been bipoles. This is when, seemingly just for the hell of it, a whole other set of speaker drivers are placed on the face of the speaker enclosure that is looking the opposite way. Mirage and Definitive Technology are probably the two most famous brands that typically make big speakers in this fashion.

These bipoles from Crystal Acoustics are a bizarre animal by comparison, as they have a bipolar design (versus dipolar), while being affordably priced for a target audience of folks who want speakers to improve sound and complement their flatscreen TV, without dominating the room. Crystal Acoustics, rather quaintly, calls it the 'plasma market'; I'm sure owners of LCD screens will appreciate the gloss black finish, too.

Simple setup

Petite and skinny, these towers arrive in a box of two pairs plus the centre speaker. There's little manual labour to do except screw the towers into their plinths. Thankfully, this only involves two screws per cabinet (no washers, no hex keys, no inexplicable bits of rubber), and they're light enough to lift one-handed. Having recently spent a good afternoon attaching another brand's speakers to their stands, this came as something of a relief.

Completing this 5.1 array is the THX-10SUBt – a woofer way more potent than those described as ideal for partnering the system in the accompanying instruction leaflet.

It's worth noting here that Crystal Acoustics doesn't have a UK distributor, so buyers order their speakers direct from the website. This cuts out the middleman, and results in a lower price point, but also means getting a demo before you get out your wallet is nigh-on impossible. Softening that blow somewhat is the brand's 60-day home trial policy.

The slender towers are called BPT and the centre is termed LCR as, of course, Crystal Acoustics offers a variety of permutations and combinations of its products. So, you could use five of the smaller boxes and ignore the towers. But you'd lose the bipole sound.

Just to prove I'm not a total multichannel nut, I did try the front pair on their own, with the bass removed as a 2.0 experiment upon setting up, and while the teeny weeny, Alucone piston drivers are immensely rigid and do go in and out a long way for their size, it is still a three-incher and I was deeply underwhelmed. In fact, when I fired up the TV through it for a bit of Glastonbury, added the resident Pioneer LX-81 decoder and posh Acurus five-channel external amp just for stereo, my Panasonic TV's built-in speakers wiped the floor with them.

Downcast, I spun up a Blu-ray. I'm still badly in the grip of *Avatar* and am learning the soundtrack a treat. And, on DTS-HD Master Audio, the point of this system finally became clear.

Serious synergy

As I'd guessed, the THX-guaranteed 10in subwoofer felt out of place – like a V8 lump in a shopping cart, it was wildly overpowered for the system. But the bipolar towers did a very clever thing indeed. The synergy created is excellent, with all those tiny three-inch drivers adding up to a very crisp midband with great definition and accuracy, honed by a lovely lack of power compression, every bit as tasty as when served up by Acoustic Energy-branded speakers. And, as long as the level isn't wicked up too far, they do this incredible, sweet yet diffuse-edged sound field.

I had the towers' tweeters above my ear height on installation, and when our hero blunders off into the deadliest jungle within six light years of Terra, the sounds of Pandoran creatures were all around and above me. I was getting funny yipping noises to the extreme right-hand corner of the room, and **the animals sounded like they were ranged into the distance, as well as close by.** It was a deeper sound field than I'd expected for £650.

It may have an ambitious design brief – with some huge limitations placed upon it by the diminutive 3in cones, so far as ultimate scale is concerned – but at sensible levels, Crystal Acoustics' BPT5-10BL system delivers a real bipolar spread. And getting that from stuff this affordable and small is certainly an impressive achievement. Definitely worth considering if you have a small viewing room.

Specifications

Crystal Audio Bipolar BPT towers

Drive Units: Two 3in concave Alucone midbass drivers in bipolar array – one fore and one aft, plus one 1in Aluminium dome tweeter with electronic protection
Enclosure: 2-way front ported
Frequency Response: 120Hz to 22kHz
Sensitivity: 90dB (2.83V @ 1m)
Power Handling: 125W
Dimensions: 120(w) x 1050(h) x 80(d)mm
Weight: 5.5Kg
Connections: Single set of binding posts

Crystal Audio LCR centre

Drive units: Two 3in concave Alucone midbass drivers, plus one 1in Aluminium dome tweeter with electronic protection
Enclosure: 2-way front ported
Frequency Response: 120Hz to 22kHz
Sensitivity: 90dB (2.83V @ 1m)
Power handling: 125W
Dimensions: 440(w) x 100(h) x 80(d)mm
Weight: 2.5Kg
Connections: Single set of binding posts

Crystal Audio THX-10SUBt

Drive Unit: One 10in (254mm) down-firing long throw paper cone woofer
Enclosure: Dual ported
Frequency Response: 35Hz to 200Hz anechoic, in-room from 19Hz to 350Hz. THX Select certified
On board power: 120W RMS
Dimensions: 280(w) x 475(h) x 470(d)mm
Weight: 20Kg
Connections: Single phono input for mono LFE



HCC VERDICT

Crystal Acoustics Bipolar Series BPT5-10BL
£600 Approx

Highs: They really do deliver that bipolar sexy spread-out sound field
Lows: System provided was unbalanced

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

No shrinking wallflower

A wall-mounted Blu-ray player under a TV? **Martin Pipe** says 'hang it all'



The BD-C7500 is one of the most distinctive Blu-ray players currently available. With its ultra-slim form-factor, vertical orientation, glossy black finish and wall bracket, it's crying out to be mounted under your flatscreen TV. Choose the desk stand at your peril; press the 'eject' button (on the remote, or the player's touch-sensitive control strip) and as it reveals the disc compartment, the entire frontispiece motors leftwards knocking over any lesser objects in its path. You have been warned...

Nevertheless, the BD-C7500 is still a package of plenty in most respects. A 3.5mm socket provides the only analogue alternative (stereo audio and composite video) to the 1080p24-capable HDMI port. Every other terminal is digital – optical audio, a USB port and Ethernet. In keeping with the ethos of wall-mounted minimalism, there's integral Wi-Fi. In addition to BD Live support, complete with 1GB of cache, are Samsung's Internet@TV platform and a DLNA-compliant networked media player. The C7500 can also deal with compatible files via USB.

Internet@TV, borrowed from recent Samsung tellies, provides PC-free access to a selection of web favourites including YouTube, Twitter and Google. Other widgets can be downloaded to the player, where they share the aforementioned 1GB with BD-Live data.

Among them are simple games such as *Texas Hold 'em*, picture-galleries, news, weather and even TV listings. BBC iPlayer and LoveFilm are

also launching soon, and even now, there's plenty to get your teeth into. And that's before you consider that the C7500 also plays Blu-ray discs, which load speedily courtesy of Samsung's 'Ultra Fast Play' technology – once the disc tray has finished its somewhat tardy dance.

Over the Moon

With a Samsung full HD 40in LCD TV and the C7500 set to output 1080p24, I was thoroughly impressed with what this designer deck could extract from Blu-ray discs. *Moon* fared well, to the extent that in the exterior shots, it was possible to identify individual stars against the infinite blackness of space. The saturated hues of instrument panels and subtler flesh tones were conveyed with equal dexterity.

Also impressive is the smoothness of movement, compared to the judder of early Blu-ray hardware.

Decent DVD transfers stand their ground, with Samsung's upscaling doing an artifact-free job. And while low-bitrate YouTube clips (HD isn't supported) and other AV mediocrity are ruthlessly exposed, well-encoded DivX HD material looks superb.

Moving to sound quality, the analogue stereo output is acceptable – but no substitute for the full high-resolution multichannel experience that's only possible here via HDMI. With our Onkyo TX-NR905 AVR and Rogers 6.1 speakers, dynamism is on tap – as is subtlety when it's called for. Overall, a decent 'lifestyle' package ●

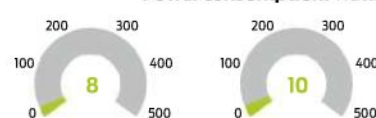
Hanger on:
The wall-mountable deck is ideal if you like your AV system clutter-free

→ Specifications

3D: No
Upscaling: YES to 1080p
Multiregion: NO Region B BD/R2 DVD
HDMI: YES, 1x HDMI v1.3
Multichannel analogue: NO stereo only
Digital audio: YES optical
SACD/DVD-A: NO/NO
Dolby True HD/DTS-HD decoding: YES
Dolby True HD/DTS-HD bitstream: YES
Profile 2.0: YES
Dimensions: 420(w) x 175(h) x 32(d)mm Weight: 1.6kg
Features: Ultra fast play; Ethernet and Wi-Fi built-in; Internet@TV online content portal; DLNA-compliant media player; USB port

→ Tech Labs

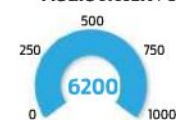
Power consumption: Watts



Idling: A good result that earns the Samsung a pat on the head

Powered: A very good figure for a Blu-ray player. Not so long ago, Samsung's very first deck topped 30W

Audio Jitter: Ps



Sound: This analogue jitter figure using the 3.5mm socket via the supplied cable is unsurprisingly poor

Loading: Boot/Java

Boot speed & tray eject
17s
Tray in to main BD menu
58s

Disc loading & Java:
Not exceptional times, but this is mainly due to the snazzy tray mechanism



HCC VERDICT

Samsung BD-C7500, £300 Approx

Highs: AV quality; networked functions; integrated Wi-Fi; sleek design

Lows: No cue/review with networked video; incompatible with some media servers

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

PRC

HOME ENTERTAINMENT SPECIALISTS

**TOP BRANDS. LOW PRICES.
UNBEATABLE SERVICE.
FOR OVER 35 YEARS.**

**THE PLACE FOR
HUGE SAVINGS
THIS SUMMER!**



**SAMSUNG DEALER
OF THE YEAR 2010**

SAMSUNG LE40C530



- 40" HD 1080P LCD TV
- Integrated Freeview
 - 1920 x 1080 Resolution
 - Connect Share Movie
 - Wide Colour Enhancer
 - USB Connection
 - 3 x HDMI Connections



£prcdirect.co.uk
FOR THE LATEST PRICE **£529**

SAMSUNG PS50C550



- 50" HD 1080P PLASMA TV
- Integrated Freeview
 - 1920 x 1080
 - 600Hz Sub-field Motion
 - AllShare, USB
 - Connect Share Movie
 - 4 x HDMI Connections



£prcdirect.co.uk
FOR THE LATEST PRICE **£599**

SAMSUNG UE40C7000



- 40" 3D HD 1080P LED TV
- Integrated Freeview HD
 - 1920x1080 Resolution
 - 3D HyperReal Engine
 - AllShare, Internet@TV
 - USB Connection
 - 4 x HDMI Connections



£prcdirect.co.uk
FOR THE LATEST PRICE **£200**

SAMSUNG UE55C9000



- 55" 3D HD 1080P LED TV
- Integrated Freeview HD
 - 1920 x 1080 Resolution
 - Clear Motion Rate 800
 - AllShare, Internet@TV
 - USB Connection
 - 4 x HDMI Connections



£prcdirect.co.uk
FOR THE LATEST PRICE

SONY KDL40EX503U



- 40" HD 1080P LCD TV
- Integrated Freeview HD
 - 1920 x 1080 Resolution
 - Motionflow 100Hz
 - Wi-Fi Ready
 - USB Connection
 - 4 x HDMI Connections



£prcdirect.co.uk
FOR THE LATEST PRICE **£599**

SONY KDL46HX803U



- 46" 3D HD 1080P LCD TV
- Integrated Freeview HD
 - 1920 x 1080 Resolution
 - Wi-Fi Ready
 - Motionflow 400 PRO
 - USB Connection
 - 4 x HDMI Connections



£prcdirect.co.uk
FOR THE LATEST PRICE **£1699**

PANASONIC TXL37D25B



- 37" HD 1080P LED TV
- Freeview & FreeSat HD
 - 1920 x 1080 Resolution
 - Vreal Pro 5
 - Viera Image Viewer
 - USB Connection
 - 4 x HDMI Connections



£prcdirect.co.uk
FOR THE LATEST PRICE **£749**

PANASONIC TXP50VT20B



- 50" 3D HD 1080P PLASMA TV
- Freeview & FreeSat HD
 - 1920 x 1080 Resolution
 - Vreal Pro 5
 - Viera Image Viewer
 - USB Connection
 - 4 x HDMI Connections



£prcdirect.co.uk
FOR THE LATEST PRICE

LG 19LD350



- 19" HD READY LCD TV
- Integrated Freeview
 - 1366 x 768 Resolution
 - XD Engine
 - Clear Voice II
 - Scart Connection
 - HDMI Connection



£prcdirect.co.uk
FOR THE LATEST PRICE **£129**

LG 42PJ650



- 42" HD READY PLASMA TV
- Integrated Freeview
 - 1024 x 768 Resolution
 - 600Hz Scan
 - Single Infinia Design
 - USB Connection
 - 2 x HDMI Connections



£prcdirect.co.uk
FOR THE LATEST PRICE **£399**

PHILIPS 40PFL9704H



- 40" HD 1080P LED TV
- Integrated Freeview
 - 1920 X 1080 Resolution
 - Ambilight Spectra 3
 - Perfect Pixel HD Engine
 - USB Connection
 - 5 x HDMI Connections



£prcdirect.co.uk
FOR THE LATEST PRICE **£1149**

TOSHIBA 32SL753B



- 32" HD 1080P LED TV
- Integrated Freeview HD
 - 1920 X 1080 Resolution
 - 100Hz Active Vision
 - SD Card Slot
 - USB Connection
 - 4 x HDMI Connections



£prcdirect.co.uk
FOR THE LATEST PRICE **£499**

COMPLETE RANGE OF LG, PANASONIC, PHILIPS, SONY, SAMSUNG & TOSHIBA TVs READY FOR DEMONSTRATION

SONY BDVE370



- BLU-RAY CINEMA SYSTEM
- Integrated Blu-ray Player
 - BRAVIA Internet Video
 - BD Live
 - 850w Total Power
 - Digital Plus/Dts HD
 - HDMI & USB Connection



£prcdirect.co.uk
FOR THE LATEST PRICE **£299**

SAMSUNG BDC5300



- BLU-RAY PLAYER
- Slim Design
 - BD Live
 - Digital Plus/Dts HD
 - Divx HD
 - Internet @ TV
 - HDMI & USB



£prcdirect.co.uk
FOR THE LATEST PRICE **£109**

PANASONIC DMPBDT300EG



- 3D BLU-RAY PLAYER
- 3D Ready Support
 - BD Live
 - 1080/50P from SD
 - Digital Plus/Dts HD
 - Divx HD, USB
 - 2 x HDMI Connection



£prcdirect.co.uk
FOR THE LATEST PRICE

LG HB965TZ



- BLU-RAY CINEMA SYSTEM
- 5.1 Surround Sound
 - Blu-ray Player
 - Wi-Fi and DLNA
 - 1100w Total Power
 - iPod Dock
 - HDMI & USB Connection



£prcdirect.co.uk
FOR THE LATEST PRICE **£529**

Choose from our range of Audio & Home Cinema...

YAMAHA

YSP600

- Sound Projector
- Digital Plus/Dts HD
- 120w Total Power
- HDMI Connection



£449

DENON

AVR4310

- 7.1 AV Receiver
- 170w x 7 Total Power
- Digital Plus/Dts HD
- HDMI Connection



£1099

BOSE

Lifestyle® V35

- Entertainment system
- 5.1 Surround Sound
- HDMI Connections



£prcdirect.co.uk

KEF

KHT1005.2

- 5.1 Speaker Package
- Uni-Q Design
- Active Subwoofer



£389

**LOWEST PRICES ON KEF
GUARANTEED. CALL NOW**

Visit our showroom 78-80 Cranbrook Road, Ilford, Essex, IG1 4NH

PRC
HOME ENTERTAINMENT SPECIALISTS

Opening Times:

Monday to Saturday - 9.00am till 6.00pm
Sunday - 11.00am till 5.00pm
Open Bank Holidays - 10.00am till 5.00pm

Parking:

Public parking at The Exchange Mall Ilford for over 1000 cars. We'll reimburse up to 2 hours parking fee with any visit to our store.

Tel: 020 8911 0311



Join us on Facebook!
Exclusive news, events & offers.
Search PRC Direct

Some of these offers are exclusive to readers of this magazine. Please quote this ad when calling. Prices valid whilst stocks last and subject to availability. All trademarks are acknowledged. E&OE. All featured products 1 per customer. Some offers may be for in store purchases only. All stock is brand new in sealed containers and fully guaranteed for one year unless clearly stated otherwise. Save prices are based on previous PRC in store selling prices and information supplied by WHF, SAV magazine, manufacturers, VW magazine and What Plasma & LCD magazine. * Terms & Conditions apply, call in store for details. Further information available on request.

SALES • INSTORE • 020 8911 0311 • WWW.PRCDIRECT.CO.UK

→ Specifications

Full HD: YES including 1080p/24 Tuner: YES
Freeview HD and analogue
Component video: YES 1 input
(rear) HDMI/DVI: YES 4 v1.4
HDMI inputs (one side)
PC input: YES 1 D-Sub Resolution:
1920 x 1080 Sound: 2 x 10W
Brightness (claimed): 500cd/m²
Contrast ratio (claimed):
300,000:1
Dimensions: 1119(w) x 679(h)
x 80(d)mm Weight: 17.6kg

Features: Video/JPEG
playback from USB;
gamma adjustment;
active 3D output; degree
of colour management;
various 3D platforms
supported; multiple AV
presets; noise/digital noise
reduction; black level
adjustment; left/right field
switching for 3D; depth
level 3D adjustment;
2D-to-3D conversion



Does my CCFL backlight look fat in this? Maybe, but it's still stylish

3D for everyone

John Archer is surprised to see a 3DTV for only £1,500, and wonders if there's a catch



This 46in TV with full HD and frame sequential 3D playback costs just £1,500, not in excess of £2K like every other active 3D TV. In other words, it promises to be the set that brings 3D to the masses.

Since it uses a standard CCFL backlight, it's loads fatter than the wafer-thin delights of Samsung's edge LED models. But it's still fairly stylish for all that.

The 46C750's connections give even less indication of the TV's budget nature. For, as well as four v1.4 HDMI inputs, the set sports two USBs for multimedia functions and an Ethernet port.

The latter is there to provide no less than three services. First, it supports the set's Freeview HD tuner, so that you can access the platform's future interactive services. Secondly, the Ethernet allows the TV to jack in to a DLNA PC, for streaming in multimedia files you might have stored there. And finally, you can use the port for accessing Samsung's Internet@TV online service, which has been greatly improved by the additions of Twitter, Facebook, LOVEFILM and perhaps best of all, the BBC iPlayer. So far as we know, Samsung is the first TV brand to get the iPlayer working on a TV.

Impressively for this price point, you can also use the USBs to record programmes from the Freeview HD tuner to USB HDDs, which can be from any brand.

The 46C750 further belies its striking affordability by being exceptionally flexible with its picture calibration tools. Particularly important for a 3DTV is the 46C750's impressively adjustable Motion Plus system.

There's also a passably flexible colour management system, plenty of noise reduction options, gamma

adjustments, black level and contrast boosters, and even a shadow detail booster that brightens dark picture areas while leaving the overall brightness level intact.

A disappointing aspect of this Samsung is that it doesn't ship with any active shutter 3D glasses. You can get one pair sent to you when you register your TV purchase online, but factor in the cost of another pair.

Cross purposes

The 46C750 is a good 2D performer for its money, and thankfully, the quality extends to its 3D performance, too. Certainly its 3D images look brighter and more colour-rich than those of most rival brands. Add in some respectably clean motion handling and it's easier to appreciate the extra detail of the full HD 3D format versus passive 3D technology.

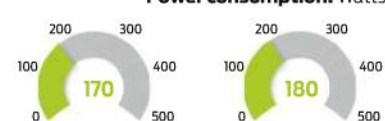
Samsung is one of just two brands at the moment to offer 2D-3D conversion on its 3D TVs. And contrary to expectations, I'd say the 46C750's converted images look quite good, adding decent depth without creating many perspective errors – especially with HD material.

For all the 46C750's good 3D work, though, it doesn't take long to spot a rather predictable problem: ghosting around objects in the mid and far distance. Otherwise known as crosstalk noise, this is evident with both Sky's side-by-side and Blu-ray's sequential frame 3D systems, and can regularly distract from what you're watching.

With some surprisingly decent sound quality keeping the pictures company, the 46C750 can be considered a good value buy even if you never use its 3D facility. And the presence of the latter at only £1,500 will definitely turn some heads ●

→ Tech Labs

Power consumption: Watts



White screen:
Energy Saving Mode reduces it to 70W (high); 90W (medium); 110W (low)

Test footage:
In standard mode with 'eco' features disable, this screen uses an average of 180W

Contrast: Ratio



Picture: The backlight is clearly visible in a darkened room, thus a poor black level reading and a disappointing result

Colour temp: Kelvin



Presets:
A fair range of CT presets including a 'Warm 2' setting which is spot on. The Advanced Settings menu has a 'white balance' option with full R/G/B offset and gain adjustments.
Cool: 9,900K
Normal: 9,200K
Warm 1: 7,700K
Warm 2: 6,500K

HCC VERDICT

Samsung LE46C750
£1,500 Approx

Highs: Good 2D pictures; plenty of set-up options; surprisingly effective 2D-3D conversion

Lows: 3D playback suffers ghosting noise; very limited viewing angle

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

AV/CV

Product:
46in LCD TV that uses a CCFL to deliver 3D playback on a budget

Position:
The only 3D CCFL LCD TV in Samsung's range

Peers:
LG 47LD950, Sony KDL-40HX803

Teardrop explodes

Runco flirts with the mainstream market to spectacular effect, as

John Archer discovers

Young, gifted and ... far less expensive than you'd expect for this calibre of projector, normally used in installs

AV/CV

Product:

A high-spec, single-chip DLP projector aimed primarily at the CI market

Positioning:

One step up from the base of Runco's ultra high-end range

Peers:

JVC DLA-HD950; Sony VPL-VW200



Runco projectors tend to combine huge bodies with even bigger price tags, which makes the LS-5 a real surprise.

For it's really not substantially larger than a mainstream domestic projector – slightly taller perhaps, but with a fairly standard footprint. It looks good, too, thanks to its rounded, teardrop shape and smart black finish.

When it comes to price, HCC can't recall a Runco projector with a price of less than five figures. Yet the LS-5 costs less. In fact, so 'mass market' is this product that you may be able to get one directly from UK distributor Pulse Marketing, rather than going through Runco's normal Custom Installation route.

Of course, simply being more affordable doesn't automatically make the LS-5 a great buy. It still needs to deliver on the picture and feature fronts.

The LS-5's installation flexibility can also be seen in its provision of two ISF presets, supported by the same extensive colour management system used on much higher-end Runco models, plus 10 separate sharpness controls, colour space/temp/gamut/'SatCo' (colour booster) options, and RGB offset and gain adjustments.

Kiss my iris

The projector also offers manual vertical and horizontal image shifting, and ConstantContrast and AdaptiveContrast options that can automatically adjust the projector's aperture in response to the image content. Other projectors have dynamic iris features, too, but Runco's is exceptionally advanced, comprising 200 different aperture positions, an unusually low-mass

actuator and an ability to function at the frame rate of the incoming signal.

More impressive flexibility concerns the lens options; as well as 1.86-2.2 standard and 1.56-1.85 short-throw lens options, Runco also does its own easily attached anamorphic lenses.

The LS-5 seems robustly built, but is surprisingly noisy. Runco's own figures suggest a quite high 30dB volume level. The fan noise is at least constant and so is easier to 'filter out' mentally. But it's still something an installer needs to work round.

The noise factor becomes easier to forgive, though, when you find yourself staring in amazement at its sensorially bright, dynamic and lustroously rich pictures.

Images pop off the screen in a way no cheaper projector we've ever seen gets close to. And, remarkably, the LS-5's brightness and dynamism is achieved without compromising contrast. For within a single, punchy frame it's easily possible to find rich, detailed dark areas right alongside punchy, bright areas.

This is particularly true with the AdaptiveContrast functionality operational, so it's a relief to discover that this feature hardly ever generates a brightness jump that's distractingly obvious.

Thanks to the projector's superb automatic judgement of brightness and contrast, the LS-5 also produces a greater sense of image depth than arguably any other single-chip DLP projector we've seen – an achievement further enhanced by the image's stunning sharpness. The LS-5 seems completely free of the sort of clarity issues that often hamper single-chip DLP projectors. There's almost no rainbow effect, in spite of the image's gorgeously rich, bright tone.

Meanwhile, the tonal richness and diversity is mesmerising, with a level of dynamism that's potent enough to justify the projector's price tag. The LS-5's NegativePulse lamp technology (which adjusts the lamp output for each colour wheel segment) to improve colour bit depth, clearly works extremely well.

Chip passes muster

I can't fault the LS-5's pictures. It consistently produces images of such intensity, clarity and stability that I find it hard to believe they're not coming from a three-chip DLP projector. And you can't give a single-chip DLP model higher praise

→ Tech Labs

Power consumption: Watts



White screen:
The Runco produced a standard figure for this type of DLP projector

Test footage:
in Standard Mode, no change from white screen, and the power consumption drops to 235 in Economy Mode

Contrast: ratio



Picture: Well above the manufacturer's specification. This is an excellent result, and when calibrated it jumps to 64,500:1

Colour temp: Kelvin



Preset:
Accuracy for all presets were consistently just below the stated specifications, except for the Native, which was the most accurate at 6600K. Manual calibration to obtain perfect 6500K is possible.

→ Specifications

3D Ready: No
Full HD: Yes 1080p/24
Component video: Yes 2 (1 RCA, 1 BNC)
HDMI: Two v1.3
PC input: Yes 1 D-Sub
12V trigger: Yes 2
Resolution: 1920x1080
Brightness (claimed): 1,000 Lumens
Contrast ratio (claimed): 15,000:1
Dimensions: 449.6(w) x 193(h) x 523(d)mm
Weight: 9.88kg
Features: ISF support; extensive colour management; optical image shift; automated aperture adjustment option; SatCo colour booster; NegativePulse lamp; 2,000-4,000hrs lamp life depending on selected brightness output; RS-232 control port



HCC VERDICT

Runco LS-5,
£7,500 approx

Highs: Superb colour response; brighter than claimed; excellent contrast; minimal DLP rainbowing or motion artefacts

Lows: It runs rather noisily

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

Procella, queens of the garage

Adam Rayner sees the 'lite' and wishes it had a little more bite...



I have followed the development of the surround sound codecs since before they were let loose on the general public. In fact, I had only just hooked up a spare pair of speakers to the outputs on my then, huge Sony TV, to run what's called a Hafler surround, when I joined HCC. It involved hooking up the speakers in the rear out of phase, but pointing in towards the listener.

It was interesting but nothing like as cool as Dolby Pro-Logic, and when I was taken on a press trip to hear stereo rears for what was then called

Dolby AC-3, I nearly died of delight. Then of course came DTS and we now have fully lossless surround codecs from both Dolby and DTS, plus some fierce processing power available from our AVRs to interpolate seven surround channels.

I also love all the different 'stings' or short format demo clips that both Dolby and DTS use, from the original full-size steam train to the jet-pack powered THX robot and the ridiculous DTS wobble-wobble-ping thing. Trouble was, nearly every speaker and amplification system I

Not big on looks: this set is designed to be heard, but not seen

tried couldn't really cope with the lunatic levels and dynamics of that one DTS sting above all others. The movies would sound mostly fine, but very few speaker systems could deliver what the roaring dinos of the *Jurassic Park* franchise wanted to offer up.

In the beginning

And so it was that, inside the DTS organisation, some speakers were being designed for use in the internal demo theatre, which had to impress folks from the movie industry. These soundboxes turned out to be so amazing that they spawned their own company, Procella Audio, and are now marketed via custom install distribution company, Pulse.

And that is just as well, as there is no way on earth that the average speaker customer would look twice at these boxes. Not for Procella Audio is the world of branded cast alloy parts nor pretty veneers. In fact, 'pretty' and 'design' are offensive words to the company. However, I do feel that these 'merely functional' speaker products do have some small duty to have a modicum of appeal, especially as the system on test is a Procella 'lite' array, which includes the smaller enclosures and entry-level woofer. As such it's meant for smaller rooms, being positioned closer to the mass market and not the hardcore CI crowd. But **the manufacturer has utterly neglected this kit's desirability.**

Now you may feel it is as irrelevant as the makers clearly do, but when I spend £1,700 on a loudspeaker that's part of a fabulous £10K set, I don't expect to find the serial number stuck on a flimsy, white paper address label from a stationers' shop. Nor do I like that the only branding on show is a sticky-backed plastic thing that comes off if you brush a sleeve against the grille it's slapped on to.

As per the Revolver speaker brand of old and the very early Acoustic Energy speakers, it's a product of a genius designer, or design team, and no one in the company dares point out that the emperor is not only naked, but also damned offensive to look at. That said, the very first AE product used pukka badges and costly metal film serial number stickers, whereas these look like a shed project by comparison.

In their defence, these speakers are specifically designed to go behind acoustically transparent screens or else, by dint of their 7.5° of slope to



AV/CV

Product: The smaller end of a system of CI-based speakers, originally designed to be used for DTS.

Positioning: A lofty product of some very highly qualified and expert designers, intended as a simple pinnacle experience.

Peers: JBL Synthesis Performance HT; Klipsch B-2



their cabinets, be mounted pointing down slightly, upon the wall, and therefore simply never be in line of sight. But as a buyer, I would wonder quite why the things were so costly. Contrast them with the delicious engineering of Monitor Audio's Platinum Series (HCC #186) and you might wonder that, too.

So what products am I whingeing about? Well, I auditioned two P6s and three P8s, each described as an LCR product, as well as the P10 subwoofer. I was surrounded by compression-driven horns and sealed enclosures with a single high quality driver in each.

Voice of reason

The marketing bumpf takes a simple axiom – that of the identical voicing of each enclosure in a system for synergy reasons – and calls it Identical Voice. I feel that as the driver in the P6 is on a rubbery surround, while the driver in the P8 is on old-fashioned honest, folded linen, that this is piffle. (Consider, too, that the P8's compression driver is a 1.5in while the P6's is 1in).

Utilitarian: Signs of branding are negligible and product ID is flimsily stuck on the rear of each piece

Even identically 'voiced', louder is seen as better and the rears had to be cranked to get a level commensurate with the fronts. As Procellas are designed for high power use, you are then up against the rear channels of your amp working far harder, and that alone kicks dents into your identical voicing.

And then comes the filtering down. The full-fat Procella product does literally inspire awe. Proper British, actual awe. And that's rare. A home cinema in the US just achieved full THX certification with Procella Audio speakers, using six subwoofers and huge amounts of power. In the case of the P6 especially, there is a total lack of awe. Sometimes, when you scale down this far the essence of a brand disintegrates.

Don't get me wrong, these are high-quality speakers and all that is published in their extensive white papers about linearity and power and fabulously-controlled dispersion is true, but for me this is like early Mercedes A class cars; essence of brand filtered down to the point of disappointment.

Like some professionally-derived audio kit I have seen in the past, this stuff is as domesticated as a Scottish Wildcat. By which I mean it's ugly, brutal to look at, but works to lofty standards. The single XLR input to the subwoofer is evidence of this. At least you get a pro-to-home adaptor that augments our 'normal' hardware with a phono socket. (Thereby adding an annoying inch or two behind it, too.)

Start clearing the garage

The woofer goes deep and tight, and both the P6 and P8 alike use very posh drivers that really do play with clarity and potency. The imagery from the horns and the placement around you is excellent.

There's no microscopic 'sweet spot', but instead you get even, full range coverage, just like the sound you'd expect down at your local commercial multiplex.

Linear and smooth, even if restrained and polite, with none of the dome tweeter snappiness that is so typical of metal domes, these are speakers for non-speaker heads who just want to be assured of having good performance.

So to sum up, this system is still not a domestic product, but in its 'lite' form, as here, it's perfect for garage conversion cinemas •

→ Specifications

Procella Audio P8 LCR (£1,695 each)

Drive Units: One 8in (200mm) Neodymium magnet driver with one 1.7in compression driver with polyester diaphragm and elliptical constant directivity wave guide horn
Enclosure: 2-way sealed 15l enclosure
Frequency Response: 80Hz to 20kHz (-3dB)
Sensitivity: 92dB (2.83V @ 1m)
Power Handling: 250W rms, 1,000 peak
Dimensions: 470 (w) x 485 (h) x 200/150 (7.5° slope) (d)mm
Weight: 15.5Kg
Connections: Single pair of Gold plated binding posts

Procella Audio P6 LCR (£995 each)

Drive Units: One 6.5in (165mm) high efficiency woofer and one 1in (25mm) compression driver with polyester diaphragm and elliptical constant directivity wave guide horn
Enclosure: 2-way sealed 9 litres enclosure
Frequency Response: 70Hz to 20kHz (-3dB)
Sensitivity: 90dB (2.83V @ 1m)
Power Handling: 100W rms, 300w peak
Dimensions: 565(w) x 255(h) x 390(d)mm
Weight: 8.5Kg
Connections: Single pair of gold-plated binding posts

Procella Audio P10 subwoofer (£2,495 each)

Drive Units: Two 10in (250mm) long throw woofers with 2.5in (65mm) voice coils.
Enclosure: Sealed heavily internally braced MDF
Frequency Response: -3dB @ 26Hz
On board power: 350w + 350w RMS Class D
Dimensions: 680(w) x 470(h) x 180(d)mm
Weight: 26Kg
Connections: Single balanced XLR input and supplied phono to XLR adaptor plug



HCC VERDICT

Procella Audio P8 x3 + P6 x2 + P10 subwoofer
 Approx £9,600

Highs: Detailed horn sound; large sweet spot and good staging

Lows: The finer details are poorly executed, shamefully so

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

dawsons

defining sound & vision since 1927

BANG & OLUFSEN
BOURNEMOUTH

B&O



Home Cinema for less than £10,000

When considering your home cinema installation, it's logical to look for established experts in every aspect of specification, design and installation. With over 80 years of experience in the audio-visual market Dawsons are also the UK's oldest Bang & Olufsen dealer, Meridian premier partner and VIP dealers for Crestron and Kaleidescape as well as a host of other leading audio-visual brands.

Couple this unrivalled pedigree with bespoke design, award winning installations and industry leading aftercare and the choice of who to call is obvious.

Dawsons is the final word in home cinema.

MERIDIAN

CRESTRON

LUTRON

kaleidescape

The LED backlighting delivers astonishing detail and contrast



→ Specifications

3D: NO HD Ready: YES 1080p/24
Tuner: YES Freeview HD, Freesat HD, analogue, plus CI slot for digital pay TV
Component video: YES 1 set (with analogue stereo audio input)
HDMI: YES 3 v.1.3 (one side-mounted), 1 v.1.4 PC input: YES D-Sub (VGA)
Resolution: 1920 x 1080 Sound: 2 x 10W
Brightness (claimed): N/A Contrast ratio (claimed): 2,000,000:1
Dimensions (w/o stand): 1032(w) x 655(h) x 77(d)mm Weight (w/o stand): 21.5kg
Features: IPS panel with LED backlight; Bluetooth connectivity; Viera Link (HDMI CEC); USB/SD-XC card slots for media playback (JPEG, MP3, DivX, AVC-HD); 2 RGB Scart; Ethernet connection; 100Hz Intelligent Frame Creation Pro; dedicated game mode; wi-fi/Ethernet (with DLNA client and VieraCast widgets including YouTube/Picasa)



Tuner three-pack

Martin Pipe thinks light-emitting diodes give Panasonic the edge, but there are plenty more features to its first LED model



Panasonic is currently the king of plasma TV. So much so, that its LCD screens often get overlooked. Now, though, it's joined the LED market, with a range of TVs from 19-42in. This set, the TX-L42D25B, is the biggest in its arsenal. Is it good enough to challenge the LED lineups of Samsung, Sony *et al*?

Distinguishing features

The advantages of LED of CCFL are now well-known, and include energy efficiency, thin screens, improved brightness, and wider colour gamuts. But there's more to a good HDTV than how it's lit, and thankfully Panasonic hasn't eschewed other technology.

The TX-L42D25B features the latest version of a technology called In-Plane Switching (IPS). This produces a wider viewing-angle and addresses one of LCD's traditional bugbears.

The TV is also capable of playing a variety of media types, including JPEG photos, MP3 music and DivX/MPEG/AVC-HD video formats. Multimedia alternatives to USB are present in the form of an SD card slot and networked playback. The latter gives you a choice of any DLNA-compliant media servers that may be on your home network and is one of the brand's Viera Tools.

On top of this is VieraCast, Panasonic's on-line entertainment and information portal. This enables access to on-demand video clips from the likes of Eurosport and YouTube. Skype is also supported, and **if you buy Panasonic's optional USB camera, video phoning becomes an option.** Networking is wired, although a wireless 'dongle' is available optionally, but I'd prefer to see the function built into the set.

The TX-L42D25B is also one of the UK's only TVs to boast no fewer than three types of TV tuner.

One current trend that hasn't made it into the screen, though, is native 3D support. As far as Panasonic is currently concerned, 3D is suited to its plasma panels.

A way with hues

Up and running, the Panasonic's colour reproduction stands out – whether the green grass on a football pitch or the red blood in *Ninja Assassin*. I viewed both of these in HD – Freeview for the football, and Blu-ray for the movie – but the chromatic capabilities also extend to SD DVDs. The latter cannot, of course, hope to get close to HD's detail, which is simply sublime, but the screen's upscaling acquits itself well. It's just a pity that none of the TX-L42D25B's armoury of electro-trickery can tame the feathery artefacts that spoil a fair few standard-def digital broadcasts.

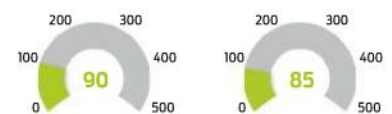
Contrast ratios and black levels were commendably good, especially after calibration. Of the picture tweaks on offer, 'intelligent frame creation' had a remarkable effect, especially with 60Hz film-derived video such as Region 1 DVDs. The judder disappears to the extent that the result could almost pass for genuine 1080p24.

The splendid images are let down by a gutless sound system that's suited only to uncritical viewing. For movies and music, add on an audio system via the rear-panel analogue and digital audio outputs.

As a first foray into LED tech goes, the TX-L42D25B impresses – it's definitely the best LCD screen I've yet seen from Panasonic. Well worth auditioning if you're looking for a new 42in set.

→ Tech Labs

Power consumption: Watts



White screen:

CATS mode – which uses a sensor to adjust brightness according to ambient light is 'on' by default. In this state we measured 90W power consumption with our 100IRE screen

Test footage:

With film footage, and volume maxed, the Panasonic's power consumption stays commendably low

Contrast: ratio



Picture: This is a solid contrast ratio in normal mode. 'Dynamic' mode ramps it up to over 120,000:1

Colour temp: Kelvin



Presets:

Only three CT presets, all of which deviate quite a bit from the ideal 6,500K point. Thankfully, tweekers can make amends in the Advanced Settings:
Cool: 30,000K
Normal: 8,400K
Warm: 12,400K

AV/CV

Product:
42in LED-backlit TV with Freesat/Freeview HD and VieraCast

Positioning:
Top of Panasonic's current LCD range

Peers:
Samsung UE40C6510;
Philips 42PFL9664H

HCC VERDICT

Panasonic TX-L42D25B
Approx £1,200

Highs: Excellent pictures, including SD; well-featured; excellent wide-angle viewing

Lows: Disappointing sound; local (not networked) MP3 playback

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5



Home Cinema

*...so good, being there
is the next best thing?*

How easy is it to buy a home cinema system that meets your expectations in terms of quality of picture and sound? You could read the magazine product reviews, find out who sells the recommendations, five-star favourites or best buys at the cheapest price and place your order. When the system is delivered to your door in the box, you get a friend who knows his onions to install it - and live happily ever after.

This is a fairly well-trodden path but it leads to dissatisfaction and a lot of wasted money. Besides there being a bewildering choice of components on the market today, there are also different ways in which components can be installed and connected together. Which sort of visual system do you go for? Projector and screen, plasma or LCD, an HD ready set or one with full 1080p capability? And on the audio side do you plump for a 5.1 or 7.1 speaker system, passive or active sub, and where do you site them for the best results? The choice of home cinema amp raises even more questions. Will you be listening to music through the same system? If so, you need an amp that approaches the performance of a decent 2-channel hi-fi amp, which is not that easy to find. Do you need SACD, DVD-Audio, or Blu-ray capability? How many inputs do you need for video, s-video, component, coaxial digital, optical digital and HDMI? The above are just a small percentage of the decisions that must be made. In short, it's complicated and very fertile ground for getting it wrong.

Achieving potential

To select a system, you could choose a collection of 'Best Buy' components in the hope that they will be a great combination. Maybe, but probably not. You could buy a pre-packaged all-in-one system from one manufacturer. This is almost certainly not the best route either as you will miss out on enormous potential. From informal surveys conducted, it appears highly likely that the majority of home cinema systems selected and installed on a DIY basis (that is without professional input) are performing at way below their optimum level. To compound matters, most are also ill-matched to the room in which they are installed and are, in reality, the wrong system. Without considerable knowledge or experience, high quality home cinema is not a suitable DIY activity.

Our aim must be to buy a home cinema system that will provide an excellent picture quality plus an audio delivery that will match, or even better, the commercial cinema experience. It must be exciting, reliable and deliver true value for money.

What and Where to buy

To ensure a home cinema system is right for you, where do you start? Here's an important tip ... **don't start with WHAT, start with WHERE.** There's only one way to give yourself the best chance of getting it right first time, and that's through a specialist AV dealer. It's possible you have preconceived ideas that put you off visiting one. Although you would welcome the advice and

guidance, you don't know the technical jargon. You don't want to be talked down to. Your friend has said they only sell expensive gear and they're not interested if you don't have a big budget. They're expensive. These are just myths.

Most specialist AV dealers are running their business because, above all, home cinema is their hobby. They spend a large portion of their time comparing systems to get the best possible results. They know the component combinations which don't gel together and, conversely, they know the combinations which give the best performance within a given price range. Very importantly, they know how to get a system working to its optimum. But they all also know the system must suit **you**.

Buying or being sold to?

There are dealers around, web based or otherwise, who will sell you anything you are willing to pay for. They may be a bit cheaper but that's all they offer. Now there's a group of long-established specialist dealers who are totally committed to putting the customer first. Their idea of 'selling' is to discuss your requirements, offer their advice, give you the best options, then play the systems for you and allow you to be the judge. You'll probably be surprised and, almost certainly, relieved to discover how easy it is to see and hear the differences between components and between systems. You'll be able to make a clear and informed decision about what to buy.

The story doesn't end there. These shops won't abandon you once you've put your hand in your pocket. They won't leave you to set up the

“...the majority of home cinema systems selected and installed on a DIY basis (that is without professional input) are performing at way below their optimum level.”



system you've selected as best you can. They'll install it in your home, make sure it performs to its best, and ensure you're entirely happy with the way it works. Why? Because a high proportion of these dealers' custom comes through people who have bought from them before, either directly or by recommendation. It's vital to them to get it right for you.

Getting the best deal

Unless you've got money to burn, you'll be living with your new system for years. Most of these dealers offer much longer equipment guarantees than provided by the manufacturer, a very worthwhile benefit, but it also makes it in the dealer's interest to ensure high build quality and reliability. Maybe you could save a few pounds by buying piecemeal but you'll lose out on the overall package. As far as the dealers are concerned, they believe that taking care of their customers properly is a nicer way of doing business than just handing over boxes.



FREE
Home/Site
Survey Worth
£100+vat

Arrange a **FREE** Home/Site System Assessment (worth minimum £100+vat) with a systems expert from the TOP20UK Specialist Home Entertainment Dealers listed on this page without any obligation!! The value of the voucher will also be credited against any purchase (over £1,000 in value).

Visit: www.top20uk.info
and go to 'Vouchers' and enter code HCC50

LISTED BELOW ARE 20 OF THE BEST AV SHOPS IN THE COUNTRY.

They have been selected because they are known to do an excellent job in guiding customers towards home cinema systems that will provide years of superlative performance and total satisfaction.

STAR QUALITIES

VALUE FOR MONEY	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
SERVICE	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
FACILITIES	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
VERDICT	★ ★ ★ ★ ★

OUR TOP 20 UK SPECIALIST AV DEALERS

SOUTH

Chelmsford RAYLEIGH HI-FI SOUND & VISION
216 Moulsham Street. 01245 265245

Colchester RAYLEIGH HI-FI SOUND & VISION
33 Sir Isaac's Walk. 01206 577682

Kingston-upon-Thames INFIDELITY
9 High Street, Hampton Wick.
020 8943 3530

Maidenhead AUDIO VENUE
36 Queen Street. 01628 633995

Rayleigh, Essex RAYLEIGH HI-FI SOUND & VISION
44a High Street. 01268 779762
Custom Install Dept.
01268 776932

Southend-on-Sea RAYLEIGH HI-FI SOUND & VISION
132/4 London Road. 01702 435255
Tunbridge Wells KENT HOME CINEMA
69 London Road, Southborough.
01892 535007

LONDON

Ealing AUDIO VENUE
27 Bond Street. 020 8567 8703

N1 GRAHAMS HI-FI
190a New North Road. 020 7226 5500
SW11 ORANGES & LEMONS
61-63 Webbs Road, Battersea.
020 7924 2040

MIDLANDS

Coventry FRANK HARVEY HI-FI EXCELLENCE
163 Spon Street. 024 7652 5200

Nottingham CASTLE SOUND & VISION
48/50 Maid Marian Way. 0115 9584404

Solihull MUSIC MATTERS
93-95 Hobs Moat Road. 0121 742 0254

NORTH

Chester ACOUSTICA
17 Hoole Road. 01244 344227

York SOUND ORGANISATION
2 Gillygate. 01904 627108

SCOTLAND

Aberdeen HOLBURN HI-FI
441 Holburn Street. 01224 585713/572729

Edinburgh LOUD & CLEAR
Bonnington Mill, 72 Newhaven Rd.
0131 555 3963

Glasgow GLASGOW AUDIO
135 Great Western Road.
0141 332 2200/4707



The majority of the above dealers are members of one or both of the major trade organisations, BADA or CEDIA.

Kit that's got IT all

This multi-room media server/Blu-ray player/PC charms **Danny Phillips**



Vivadi is hoping to entice punters who want a multi-room entertainment system at an affordable price.

The latest unit in its range of network media servers and clients is the MM320. It's a Media Center PC equipped with a 1TB hard-disk drive and a Blu-ray player, and it's styled to look like a piece of AV kit.

As such, it's dressed in a minimal gloss black finish with a *Tron*-like blue light flashing across the fascia. Some sort of LED display or a few controls on the front might have been more helpful, though.

The HDMI makes it easy to connect to a TV and carries 1080p/24 Blu-ray pictures, but it doesn't support HD audio bitstream output. Instead Dolby True HD and DTS HD Master Audio are converted to PCM, which shouldn't be an issue for any HDMI-equipped receiver.

Choose your size

Using the Ethernet port Vivadi can fit out your home with a full multi-room system, with the MediaServer unit at its heart and up to 20 client units. The MediaServer can be made bespoke (4, 6 and 8TB options are available) priced between £2,500 and £3,500.

Downloading BD Live content via the port is supported by ArcSoft's TotalMedia Theater 3, the unit's Blu-ray playback software.

The unit is remarkably deep to accommodate the cooling mechanism and various cards and drives. Inside is a dual-core 64-bit,

Chameleon:

Less PC and more AV, it's styled to fit seamlessly with the rest of your kit

2 x 3GHz processor with 2GB of RAM, as well as twin Freeview tuners. This makes the PVR highly flexible, and the 1TB HDD can hold around 800hrs of TV recordings. Sweet.

The unit runs Windows 7, and digital content is organised by the ubiquitous Media Center that opens when it boots up. The interface is intuitive to use and gorgeous to look at, putting recorded TV shows, music, videos and photos within easy reach.

The 14-day EPG makes channel browsing a breeze.

The supplied remote helps keep up the AV façade, but sadly, I found it too cluttered. Step out of Media Center and the MM320 offers full PC functions, complete with a KeySonic wireless keyboard.

Our test unit came with SlySoft AnyDVD software installed and, although it takes over an hour to rip a Blu-ray disc, the resulting quality is excellent. Likewise Blu-ray pictures from the disc drive deliver scalpel-sharp detail, rich, effulgent colours and fluid motion. Subjectively it's as good as any budget to midrange standalone deck.

When piped through a decent sound system we can't fault its audio quality. I was also pleased to find that the unit loads discs fairly quickly and runs smoothly even when running other software at the same time.

All in all, the MM320 is a decent Media Center PC that boasts a solid range of features, although the spec is a little light compared with MCPCs from rival brands. The slight niggles with Blu-ray processing might put off picture pedants ●

→ Tech Labs

Power consumption: Watts



Standby: In standby mode, the Vivadi won't inflate your electricity bill too much

Powered: This is a typical power consumption for a media centre PC

→ Specifications

Connections: HDMI output; coaxial digital audio output; 4 x USB ports; DVI output; 15-pin VGA, printer serial port; line in/out; Ethernet

Tuner: 2 x Freeview

Network interface: Ethernet

Software: Windows 7 (3GHz processor, 2GB RAM)

Other: BD disc drive with 1080p/24 support; multichannel PCM output from HDMI; DVD upscaling to 1080p; 14-day EPG; Wi-Fi USB dongle and wireless keyboard

Dimensions: 330(w) x 98(h) x 423(d)mm **Weight:** N/A

AV/CV

Product: Media Center PC with built-in Blu-ray spinner

Positioning: Towards the top of the range, one step down from the MediaMaster Pro

Peers: Cryo HTPC; MediaPC4U

HCC VERDICT

Vivadi MediaMaster MM320, £1,300 Approx

Highs: Smart, living room-friendly design; decent performance

Lows: Some picture glitches; poor remote control

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

...over **76 brands** ...with more being added every week!*

HOME ENTERTAINMENT MANCHESTER 2010

Hi-Fi, Home Cinema, 3D TVs, Projectors - it's all at Manchester

Great Deals and special offers only available at the Show
WIN superb prizes in our Show Competition!



Latest show news

Arcam - see the stunning new BDP100 Blu-ray player

Monitor Audio - showing the new Bronze BX range

Yamaha - new receivers and Blu-ray player

3DTV - see and compare the major 3DTV brands under one roof!

- See the first announcement of the What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision Award winners for 2010
- Visit the What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision stand at the Show for a demo and an answer to any questions you might have
- Run by Audio T in association with Sevenoaks Sound and Vision - the UK's largest independent hi-fi and home cinema chain, with over 50 stores nationwide
- The only Show of its type in the North of England - now in its 12th successful year
- Easy car parking with many local spaces
- The Show is on the edge of Manchester's extensive shopping and entertainment district with Harvey Nichols & Selfridges nearby
- A great day out for all the family

The What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision Awards 2010 will be announced at the Show - so be the first to see their 2010 winners, most of which will be on demonstration at the Show!!!

**WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
AWARDS 2010**

Current brands on show include (updated every week):

Amina, Anthem AV Solutions Ltd, Arcam, Artisan Audio, Atlas Cables, Audio Note, Audio Technica Headphones, Auralon, Audiovector, BDI, Bowers & Wilkins, Canton, Carat, Castle, Chord Company, Clearer Audio Cables, Cognoscenti High Fidelity, Cyrus, Dali, Denon, Dianemo, Diverse Vinyl, Dynaudio, Fatman, Firestone, Focal, Hanss Acoustics, Henley Designs, Hi-Fi Racks, Hi-Fi+, I.L.S., Icon Distribution, JVC, KEF, Kimber, Lehmann, Marantz, Meridian Audio, Mitchell Engineering, Monitor Audio, Naim Audio, Off The Wall, Olive, Onkyo, Optimum, Ortofon, Panasonic, Paradigm, Philips, Pioneer, Pro-Ject, ProAc, Pure Sound, Quad, Rega, Resolution Audio, Richter Acoustics, Ringmat, Roksan, Rotel, Russ Andrews Accessories, Samsung, Screen Innovations, SIM2, Sonos, Sony, Sunfire, Tannoy, van den Hul, Velodyne, Vienna Acoustics, Vita Audio, Vogel's, What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision, Wilson Benesch, Yamaha and more...

Sat 16th and Sun 17th October
Saturday 9:30am - 5:30pm Sunday 10am - 5pm

Admission: Adults £6.00

Students/Senior Citizens (over 65) £3.00

Accompanied Children under 16 Free

Tickets are only available on the day.

PLEASE NOTE: there is no dedicated trade day.

Trade and Press can pre-register by visiting the website.

Renaissance Hotel, Blackfriars Street, Manchester, M3 2EQ.

Getting to the show



By car: North, Take the M56 motorway to the City Centre

South, Take the M6 motorway north towards Manchester and exit onto the M56

By train: Manchester Victoria Station is only a 5 minute walk. Piccadilly Station is only a 5 minute taxi ride or 10 minute walk.

Organised by Audio T in association with

audio T

**SEVENOAKS
SOUND & VISION**

**WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION**

*Visit www.manchestershow.co.uk for all the latest information

'Daddy doesn't get no rest...'

A networked music player with a screen? **Martin Pipe** wants it

There are plenty of ways of auditioning music stored on a PC. A plethora of networked media players balance quality with cost is, but most are, alas, not optimised for music and require your TV to be switched on, as tracks are selected by an onscreen menu. Welcome, then, to the latest version of the famous Squeezebox networked music player, which now has an added touchscreen.

Highs

- The device connects to your audio system digitally or via analogue and both optical and coaxial are catered for. You also get a headphone socket, while Network connections can be via wi-fi or Ethernet. There's a USB port and SD card slot, too.
- The 4.3in touchscreen builds on the Squeezebox's ease of use. The screen is bright and informative (ID3 'tags' and album artwork supported, for example) without being cluttered.

- Sound quality is exemplary with decent quality files. File support is excellent and includes lossless FLAC and WAV, in addition to MP3 and WMA. 96kHz/24-bit support.

Lows

- The Squeezebox isn't a uPnP/DLNA device and requires its own software, known as 'Squeezebox Server'. This is available in Mac, Linux and Windows versions, and some NAS boxes support it, too. The Windows version I tried could be improved; for a start, only one folder containing music files (which could be an iTunes library) can be specified.
- Getting the software to recognise the device (via wi-fi) was a chore. Not all the FAT32-formatted USB devices I tried proved to be compatible, and there's no support for DRM content either.
- A speaker is built in, but it's powered from the mains.



Good looking: album artwork is clearly displayed

HCC VERDICT

Squeezebox Touch
£250 Approx

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

VIEWSONIC VMP74 → £135 Approx → <http://www.viewsonic.com/>

Webbed feat in the stream

Sam Kiildsen gives the thumbs up to this 1080p media player

The VMP74 is Viewsonic's second so-called 'full HD Network Media Player', and as the name suggests, it offers full 1080p output for video.

The device itself is a small, lightweight and glossy plastic box that fits discreetly into a TV stand. It's pretty unassuming with just a power indicator LED on the top.

Around the back you'll find an HDMI port for rigging the streamer to your HDTV or projector. This is the only option for hi-def video, although a

3.5mm AV port enables you to use fuzzy, old school composite video (alongside stereo audio).

There's also an optical digital output. On the non-audio/visual front, there's an Ethernet socket for networking duties (no wi-fi option here), plus USB and eSATA ports for connecting external hard disks and other USB storage devices.

Highs

- The VMP74's net connection enables features such as an RSS reader, full web browser and a range of video, radio and photo services. By the time you read this there should be a BBC iPlayer app up and running, too.

- You can stream from

shared folders on networked PCs and Macs and from any computer running a UPNP client, or alternatively access media files directly from devices attached via the USB and eSATA ports. I found the device compatible with most standard and hi-def videos formats.

- Hooking the box up to my wireless router and TV, the system did the rest, and I was networked and web-connected in moments.

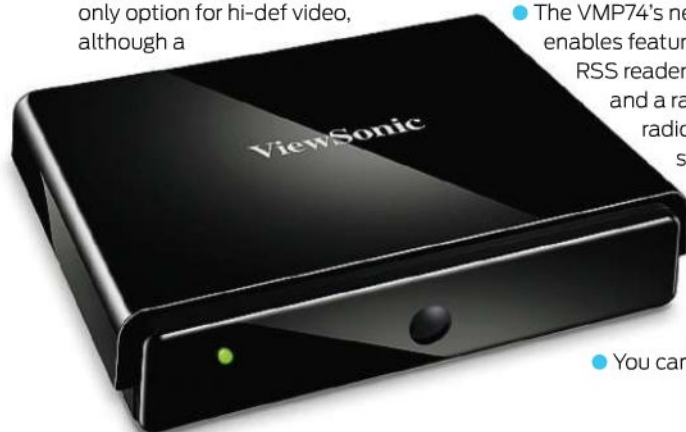
Lows

- The (Flash-less) web browser is pretty much unusable with the remote control: everything feels frustratingly unresponsive.

HCC VERDICT

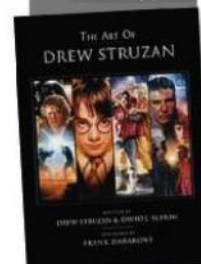
ViewSonic VMP74
£135 Approx

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5



In Brief

The Art of Drew Struzan
Titan Books
£25 approx



The artist behind the movie posters for the likes of *Star Wars* and *Back to the Future* gets showcased in this hardcover. Struzan also puts each piece in context, discussing his techniques and his thoughts on Hollywood and the death of the painted film poster.

1 2 3 4 5



ALL THE TOP BRANDS AT THE BEST PRICES!

CALL 020 8924 7744

OR VISIT ONE OF OUR SHOWROOMS

QUOTE REF. HCC187

LG 22LD350

- ▶ 22" HD Ready LCD TV Built-In Freeview
- ▶ Picture Wizard
- ▶ HDMI

£179.00

LG 47LE5300

- ▶ 47" HD 1080p LED TV with 100Hz
- ▶ 4 x HDMI and USB Connectivity

£829.00

LG 42LE7900

- ▶ 42" LED Infinia TV with Freeview HD
- ▶ 100Hz TruMotion / NetCast / DLNA
- ▶ Also available in 32", 37" & 47"

£889.00 **NEW MODEL**

LG 50PK590

- ▶ 50" HD 1080p Plasma TV
- ▶ 600Hz / Freeview HD
- ▶ 4 x HDMI / USB

£669.00

LG 22LE3300

- ▶ 22" HD Ready Ultra Slim LED TV
- ▶ 2 x HDMI / USB Connectivity / Freeview
- ▶ Also available in 19", 26" & 32"

£209.00

LG Life's Good

FULL LED 3D

3D TV IS HERE SEE IT NOW @ RGB

Model Shown: 42LX6900 (£1349.00) Also available in 47"

LG HT305SU

- ▶ 5.1 DVD Home Cinema System
- ▶ USB Direct Recording / USB Plus
- ▶ 1080P Upscaling / DivX

£119.00

LG HB905DA

- ▶ 2.1 Blu-ray & DVD Home Cinema System
- ▶ BD-Live / Netcast
- ▶ 1080P Upscaling / DLNA

£249.00

LG 60PK990

- ▶ 60" Infinia Plasma TV with Freeview HD
- ▶ 600Hz / 4 X HDMI Inputs
- ▶ Netcast / Wifi Ready

£1699.00

LG HT44S

- ▶ 2.1 DVD Home Cinema System
- ▶ USB Direct Recording / USB Plus
- ▶ 1080P Upscaling / DivX

£129.00

LG BD570

- ▶ Blu-ray Player with Media Centre
- ▶ YouTube from LG Netcast
- ▶ Wi-Fi and DLNA

£149.00

LG BX580

- ▶ 3D Blu-Ray Player
- ▶ Wi-Fi and DLNA / BD-Live
- ▶ YouTube, Picasa & AccuWeather from LG Netcast

£209.00

LG 60PK790

- ▶ 60" Infinia Plasma TV with Freeview HD
- ▶ 600Hz / 4 X HDMI Inputs / Netcast / Bluetooth
- ▶ Also available in 50"

£1439.00 **NEW MODEL**

Ilford Showroom:
543-549 High Road, Ilford, Essex IG1 1TZ
Call 020 8924 7744

Open Monday to Saturday 9am - 6pm & Sunday 10:30am - 5pm. Open All Bank Holidays 10am - 5pm
Free On-site Parking with Public Car Park Opposite Store



Loughton Showroom:
121 Roding Road, Loughton, Essex, IG10 3BS
Call 020 8508 3399

Open Monday to Saturday 9am - 5:30pm except Thursday (closed). Closed Bank Holiday Monday.
Free customer car park at rear of store

rgb
electrical superstore

Finishing touches

Adrian Justins trawls the shelves for those must-have home cinema extras



DENON D-X1000BD

Approx £800

Mini sound systems often mean minimal performance levels that fall short when viewing Blu-ray movies, but Denon reckons it has come up with the HD goods with its latest single-box solution, the D-X1000BD. Distilled from high-end Denon separate components, this £800 receiver/deck combo outputs 2 x 70W and supports Dolby Virtual Speaker and Dolby Headphone. Dual speakers can be supplied courtesy of a £100 upgrade, and you can plug in your own subwoofer to maximise your cinema sound.

Multimedia options include USB inputs, an optional iPod dock and Ethernet networking. The D-X1000BD handily detects every type of media automatically and even selects the optimum playback mode.

www.denon.co.uk

HCC VERDICT

On paper it looks like the sort of super-smart quality we've come to expect from Denon

OMNI BEANBAGS

Approx £99

Comfortable seating is as essential a component of a home entertainment system as a decent Blu-ray deck or HD screen and what could be more comfy than a giant pillow?

Sumo bean bag manufacturer is now offering direct sales to UK customers of its Omni and Gamer bean bag chairs. Made from rip-proof nylon and measuring 1.37 x 1.65m, the company's bags weigh just over 8kg and come in 10 different colours.

www.sumolounge-uk.com

HCC VERDICT

Super-squashy for lolling around in front of the TV, (but owners of 3D TVs beware – you need to sit upright!).





GECKO AV FURNITURE

From £250

New kid on the block, Gecko, reckons it has incorporated several clever ideas into its range of AV stands, including an intelligent ventilation system that pulls cool air from beneath the cabinet and expels warm air out of the back panel.

Performance orientated features include integrated surge-protected power strips and isolated shelves, while the back panel can also be removed for easy access to connections and wiring. The company uses darkened glass on the cabinet front, which enables remote control signals to pass through the glass yet keeps distracting equipment hidden from view.

www.gecko-furniture.co.uk

HCC VERDICT

Like no other stand we've seen

PEERLESS CABLES

From £40 to £150

Not replacing the cheap HDMI cable that comes in the box with your TV, PVR or Blu-ray deck is considered tantamount to home cinema heresy. Cable specialist, Peerless, has a range of quality upgrades that meet the latest HDMI v1.4 standard. Owners of wall-mounted super-slim LED TVs may be enticed by the suitably skinny Slimline cable with 90° connector. At the top end of the scale the flagship Omega cable is electrically insulated to the highest standards, has 24k 'hard' gold cable contacts, and boasts oversized silver-plated PCOFC copper conductors, which provide the digital signal with more headroom.

www.peerless-av.co.uk

HCC VERDICT

Reap what you sow



AIPTEK 3D HD CAMCORDER

From £199

Budding James Camerons needn't wait for Panasonic's £1,400 HDC-SDT750 3D camcorder to shoot their own Avatar sequel in 3D if they're prepared to compromise on quality a tad. Gadget website, Firebox, is already selling a 3D cam made by Aiptek for just £199. The dual lens model records video at 1,280 x 720 resolution on to SD card. It has a parallax barrier display that lets you watch results without the need for special 3D specs or you can hook up directly to a 3D TV over HDMI.

www.firebox.com

HCC VERDICT

This may be just for fun but 3D without specs is the way to go

Clips...

Small items that will make a big difference to your system

One For All Universal Travel Power Pack



£30

This device means you can keep your AV kit charged even when no power sockets are available.

It features a 1050mAh battery which, once charged up using the UK or EU adaptor, gives up to 100hrs of extra power (standby time) when you're on the move. A battery indicator tells you how much power is left. www.oneforall.com

Blackbox M10 headphones

£90



If you like to enjoy your AV entertainment on the road from a portable device

it's paramount to use superior headphones. These noise-cancelling phones weigh just 180g and will deliver 40hrs of aural isolation from a single AAA battery. They're fitted with durable and ultra-soft ear pads and supplied with rotating headphone cups.

www.blackboxonline.com

Supra AGS-10k Humbuster



£100

Does your system suffer from hum? If so, the Humbuster

from Swedish cable company Supra claims to eliminate hum and noise problems that can occur in home cinema set-ups. The AGS-10k uses toroidal transformers with wide frequency range and low distortion, even at the lowest frequencies. The chassis is made from extruded aluminium, which helps prevent RFI pick-up, whilst gold-plated phono sockets complete the picture.

www.supracables.co.uk

**TEXT
NOW!**
FOR YOUR
CHANCE
TO WIN

Win! Win! Win!

The Simpsons DVDs & a Sony HDTV



To celebrate the release of *The Simpsons: The Complete Thirteenth Season* on DVD, our friends at Twentieth Century Fox have donated six DVD boxsets, and an HDTV, to give away to HCC readers.

The thirteenth season of the Emmy award-winning show features 22 side-splitting episodes, with guest stars

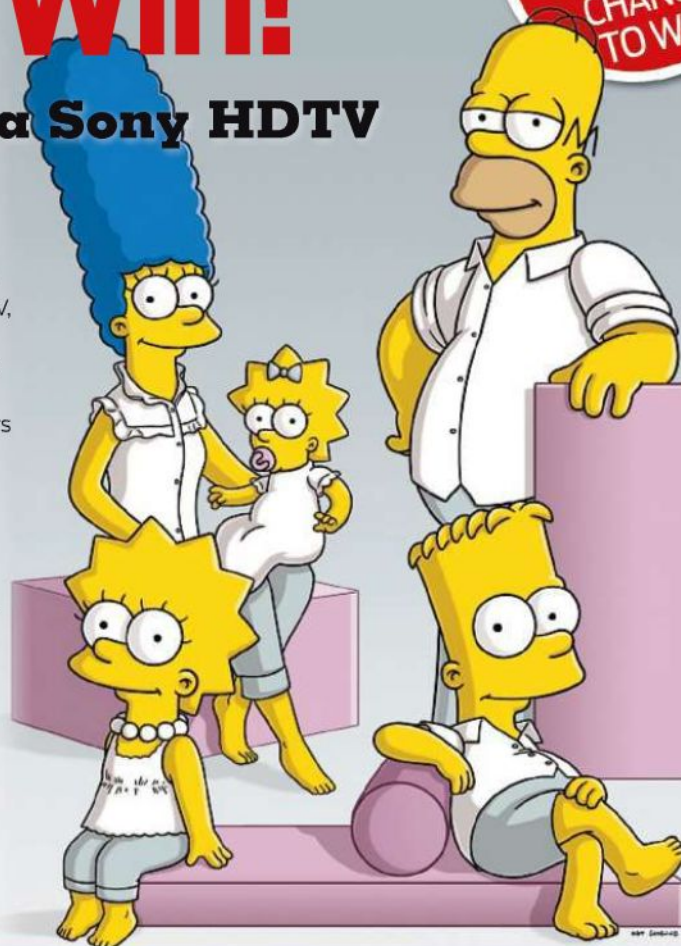
including Ben Stiller, Reese Witherspoon, Richard Gere, Pierce Brosnan and Paul Newman. Special features on the DVD disc include deleted scenes, audio commentaries on each episode, featurettes, storyboards, animatics, Easter Eggs and much more.

The winner will also take home Sony's KDL-26EX302, a stylish 26in HD Ready LCD TV with integrated Freeview tuner, and music, photo and video playback via USB. Five runners up will receive copies of *The Simpsons: The Complete Thirteenth Season* DVD.

Question: where do the Simpsons live?

A: Springchester **B:** Springfield **C:** Springfield

Text HCCSIMPSONS, space and your answer A, B or C, followed by your name and address to 87474. Texts cost 50p plus your standard network tariff. The closing date for entries is midnight on 31/10/10. Only UK entries will be accepted. Enter for free at www.futurecomps.co.uk/simpsons



THE SIMPSONS™ TM & © 2010 TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX FILM CORPORATION. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. © 2010 TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT LLC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Also up for grabs: new Blu-ray releases!

Robin Hood



Ridley Scott's historical action epic *Robin Hood: Director's Cut* is coming to DVD and Blu-ray on 20 September, courtesy of Universal Pictures, priced £20 and £25 respectively. To celebrate, we've

teamed up with the studio to offer five lucky readers the chance to win a copy of the Blu-ray. All you have to do to enter is to visit the website at www.futurecomps.co.uk/robin, and answer the question:

Who is Robin Hood's love interest?

A: Maid Margaret **B:** Maid Marian
C: Maid Marillion

Fanboys



on 4 October, the movie tells the hilarious story of a group of *Star Wars* fans who plan to steal the first cut of *The Phantom Menace* before it hits cinemas. All you have to do to enter is to visit the website at www.futurecomps.co.uk/fanboys, and answer the question:

Who directed The Phantom Menace?

A: George Lucas **B:** Steven Spielberg
C: Martin Scorsese

Cop Out



to buy on DVD and Blu-ray from 20 September, and thanks to Warner Home Video we've got five copies of the Blu-ray to give away. All you have to do to enter is to visit the website at www.futurecomps.co.uk/copout, and answer the question:

Kevin Smith appeared in which Bruce Willis action flick?

A: Die Hard 4.0 **B:** Surrogates **C:** Hostage

Robin Hood © 2010 Universal Studios. All Rights Reserved. Closing date for all competitions is October 31.

The small print: By taking part in a Competition, you agree to be bound by the Competition Rules which are summarised below but can be viewed in full at www.futurecomps.co.uk. All correct answers are placed in a draw and the winners chosen at random. Proof of posting (if relevant) shall not be deemed proof of delivery. Entries must be submitted by an individual (not via any agency or similar) and, unless otherwise stated, are limited to one per household. The Company reserves the right in its sole discretion to substitute any prize with cash or a prize of comparable value. Unless otherwise stated, the Competition is open to all GB residents of 18 years and over, except employees of Future Publishing and any party involved in the competition or their households. By entering a Competition you give permission to use your name, likeness and personal information in connection with the Competition and for promotional purposes. All entries will become the property of the Company upon receipt and will not be returned. You warrant that the Competition entry is entirely your own work and not copied or adapted from any other source. If you are a winner, you may have to provide additional information. Details of winners will be available on request within three months of the closing date. Receipt of any prize is conditional upon you complying with (amongst other things) the Competition Rules. You acknowledge and agree that neither the Company nor any associated third parties shall have any liability to you in connection with your use and/or possession of your prize. Promoted by Future Publishing, 2 Balcombe Street, London NW1 6NW



**BRINGING
YOU THE BEST
FILMS FIRST,
FOR FREE!**

THIS MONTH'S FILM: THE TOWN



**REGISTER FOR THE TOTAL FILM SCREENING CLUB AT
WWW.TOTALFILM.COM/SCREENING-CLUB**

Recent Screening Club films have included *The Switch*, *Scott Pilgrim Vs. The World*, *Bad Lieutenant* and *Heartbreaker*.

System heaven

The new breed of Blu-ray systems delivers the whole high-definition deal to your front room at tempting price points, so is it time to scrap your separates?

Jim Hill finds out

THE TEST

We chose four similarly priced and specified all-in-one Blu-ray systems and put them through the same rigorous conditions.

Objective testing in the HCC Tech Labs produced video and audio jitter measurements that could be directly compared. For the subjective testing, the four systems were assembled in an average-sized listening room and connected to a 42-inch Philips Essence TV to assess their comparative performance.

Test material included *Sherlock Holmes* on Blu-ray, *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy on Blu-ray and the same trilogy on DVD. Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon* hybrid Super Audio CD was used for additional audio testing, while various test patterns and other digital file formats were accessed from a USB flash drive and an external hard-disk drive.

With close watching, listening and A to B comparisons we were able to rate the system's performance and come up with an overall ranking that also takes features, design and ease of use into account.



**LG
HB-965TZ**

£600 Approx

LG's elegant stand-mounted speakers are designed to complement your flatscreen TV and deliver a broad sound. We also love the attractive onscreen interface that makes it a pleasure to use.

**PANASONIC
SC-BT230**

£400 Approx

With a woofer on stilts, this cost-conscious system uses compact bamboo cone speakers and offers crisp Blu-ray picture quality. The deal is further sweetened by a pop-out iPod dock and handy SD card slot.

**SAMSUNG
HT-C6730**

£600 Approx

With an additional pair of wireless speakers creating a 7.1-channel system, Samsung is offering remarkable value for money. It's crammed with web features and finished in an attractive casing too.

**SONY
BDV-E370**

£500 Approx

Sony's smart system can calibrate its own speakers using a bundled mic and offers some superb online features. It's all controllable via a typically slick Sony remote control and graphical user interface.



Blu-ray systems are the kings of convenience, offering you the whole HD deal in one compact and cost-effective caboodle. These systems are from the four biggest names in home entertainment and combine a Blu-ray deck with a multichannel amp and a full set of speakers. Simply add an HD screen. But they don't stop there: with iPod docks, interactive web content and wireless media sharing, they're bursting with extra features.

Design

Style is a major factor for systems that are intended to deliver home cinema without the clutter of separate components, and it's LG that takes this philosophy the furthest. Its elegant stand-mounted speakers are designed to complement the brand's Infinia TV range. And they're flat enough to wall mount without the need for an additional bracket. The electronics feel well made with a drop-down iPod dock that clicks snugly into

place, while the volume dial is also reassuringly solid.

LG's designers have also come up with the most attractive onscreen interface. You're greeted by a home page that has the six main icons bobbing around in animated ice cubes.

Samsung's system is finished in acres of glossy plastic that's a magnet for dust the moment you unpack. The textured, bark-like feature on the side of the subwoofer and speakers is new, and like the rest of the brand's electronics, the main unit springs to life with cool blue LEDs when you brush the touch sensitive buttons.

It's a shame Samsung hasn't put the same effort into its GUI. The home page uses still graphic icons on a cheesy, wood-effect background.

Sony's so called 'monolithic' design concept suits its new TV range, but we're less convinced when it comes to the components. The jutting control panel of the main unit looks like a flap that's been left open and the tiny black buttons are

frustratingly hard to find on the black background. In other respects, it's an impressively compact and minimal design job, and Sony's Xross Media Bar navigation system is still the best graphic interface in the business.

Panasonic's system looks a little dated. The fixed fabric grilles on the five speakers bring to mind the inexpensive boxes you tend to get bundled with DVD systems. The main unit is more stylish, and the USB ports, iPod dock and SD card slot are neatly tucked away behind flaps.

Panasonic hasn't updated its user interface for years now and as well as looking dull, it's the least intuitive and, at times, baffling.

DESIGN

Round-up: The LG oozes style inside and out. The Samsung isn't far behind, Sony's Xross Media Bar is its strongest point. The Panasonic won't win any awards

LG HB-965TZ: 1 2 3 4 5

Panasonic SC-BT230: 1 2 3 4 5

Samsung HT-C6730: 1 2 3 4 5

Sony BDV-E370: 1 2 3 4 5

LG HB-965TZ
→ £600 Approx
→ www.lge.com/uk

In brief

LG's elegant stand-mounted speakers are designed to complement your flatscreen TV and deliver a broad sound. We also love the attractive onscreen interface that makes it a pleasure to use.

Deluxe design

A Stands that deliver

Designed to match LG's Infinia TVs, these elegant speakers can be detached from the stands and mounted on a wall

B Easy iPod

It's obligatory to offer iPod compatibility, but not all systems have a built-in dock. The LG does.

C Slinky sub

The LG's thin and shiny subwoofer is a passive model that lacks precision, but pumps out a satisfying rumble

D Natural networker

The LG makes light work of connecting to a number of online services, as well as accessing multimedia files on your network



Features

Sony's system is the smallest, but it's the only one that's 3D-ready; a free firmware update will arrive via the Ethernet port when the time comes. It's also unique in offering auto speaker calibration using the supplied mic. It has the most to offer in terms of online functionality, too. Bravia Internet Video includes a brilliant version of BBC iPlayer.

Rear and front USB ports on the Sony provide access to music, photos and video files on a flash drive or HDD, while DLNA compliance means you can also access the files on a PC.

Sony's system can even play Super Audio CDs, but it is missing an HDMI input for connecting another HD device, like a PS3.

Samsung hasn't included 3D compatibility, nor does its model come bundled with a mic for auto calibration, but it does trump the Sony in two other areas. An additional pair of wireless speakers means you can enjoy extended surround formats. Alternatively, you

can wire the extra speakers above the front left and right to hear music in the enhanced DPL IIz format.

Wi-fi is not on the Sony but is featured here. A dongle plugs neatly into the rear panel and enables the system to join your wireless network. Samsung has fewer widgets than Sony, but YouTube, Picasa and AccuWeather are useful to have.

Accessing your digital files directly through the Samsung's solitary USB socket is possible, but this port only works with flash memory keys and not external hard disc drives. And, while there's a port on the back for an iPod dock that's an optional extra, it's frustrating to find no HDMI input.

The LG's feature set is similar to Samsung's, albeit without the extra pair of speakers. Instead, there's a neat, pop-out iPod dock and not one, but two HDMI inputs. At last we have a system that you can easily connect a games console and set-top box to.

LG's Netcast provides an assortment of online apps, including YouTube, Picasa and AccuWeather.

It can use built-in wi-fi to activate them and to find any other DLNA devices on your network. This, of course, means you can stream music and photos from a PC onto your TV.

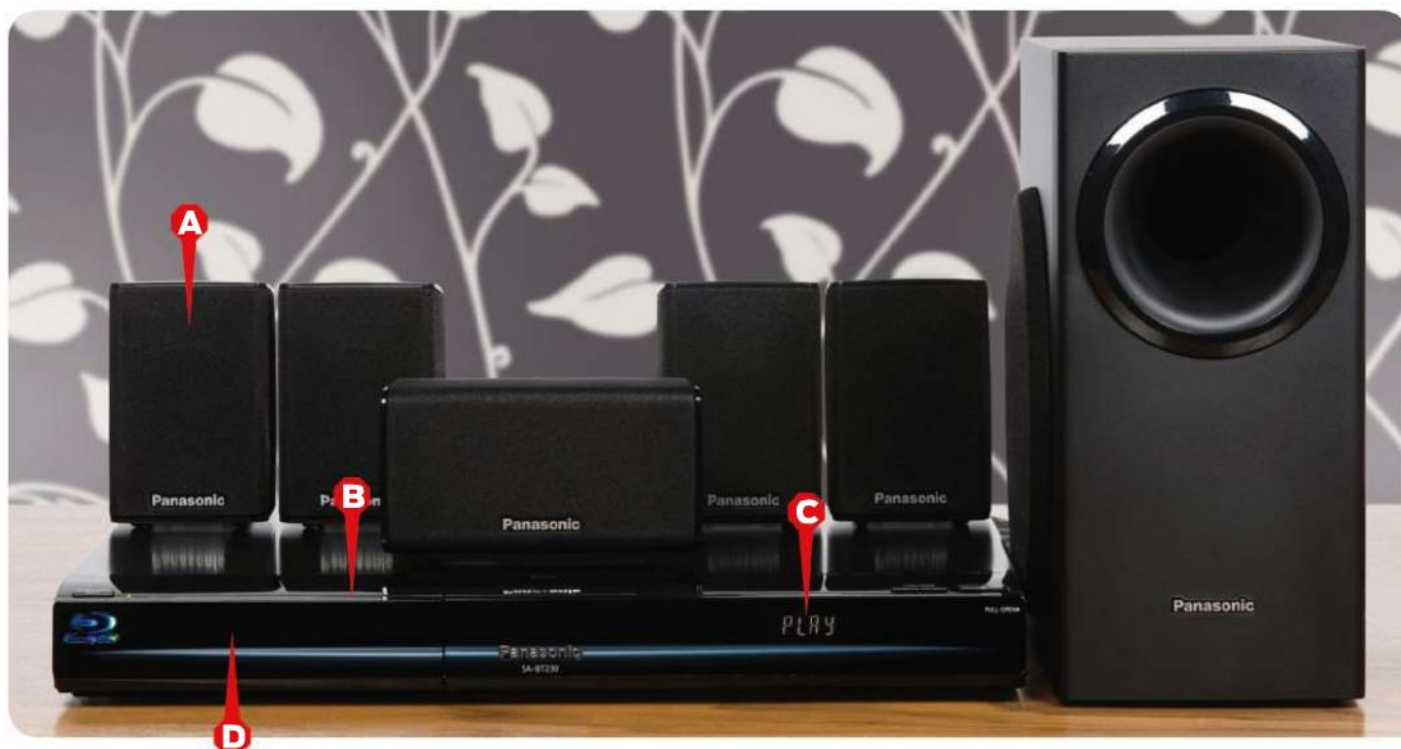
The LG's USB ports are more flexible in that they can access both flash memory and HDD devices. This gives a convenient shortcut to your MP3, JPEG and movie files and allows you to record onto them by moving one file onto another device.

Gracenote is another worthwhile feature of the LG system that automatically finds the track listing and artwork of almost any CD you play in the drive. This works for Blu-ray and DVD, too.

Finally, LG's Sound Gallery deserves a mention as it provides a useful set of seven audio presets, including MP3 Up mode, to make compressed audio tracks sound a little more dynamic.

Panasonic's system has a more modest feature set, with the iPod dock being the most obvious added benefit. However, with its SD card

PANASONIC SC-BT230 → £400 Approx → www.panasonic.co.uk



In brief

Panasonic's cost-conscious system uses compact bamboo cone speakers and offers crisp Blu-ray picture quality. The deal is further sweetened by a pop-out iPod dock and handy SD card slot.

Dated design

A Under the grille

Behind this somewhat uninspired looking speaker grille is a bamboo cone that's eco-friendly and supposedly tuned for voice clarity

B An SD world

The Panasonic uniquely offers DivX and AVC HD playback via the medium of SD card

C Plug and play

Although not able to play video files from an external hard disk, the Panasonic is DLNA compliant and can find files on your network

D Clunky interface

The Panasonic system has plenty to offer features-wise, but a dated and clumsy operating system will leave you feeling a little short-changed in terms of excitement

slot, iPod dock, USB port and an HDMI input, the Panasonic is exceptionally well connected. The memory card slot is a gift for camcorder users, who want to play back AVC HD or DivX video files in excellent quality, while the USB port is useful for accessing music and photo files. You can't play video files from this input though and it won't read from an external hard drive. It is DLNA compliant though, so you can also find files on any UPnP device on your home network.

Panasonic offers a smattering of widgets under the VieraCast banner. They're a little lacking compared with Sony and Samsung's offerings and Picasa and YouTube are slightly slower to open. The Panasonic's main problem though is the clunky interface that fails to knit all of the features together as appealingly as the other systems.

Performance

When it comes to sound quality, the Samsung has something of an

advantage with the additional speakers. The 7.1 arrangement suits the DTS HD Master Audio 6.1 soundtrack of the *LOTR* Blu-ray discs very well. With the enhanced surround back channel you get a very cohesive surround effect and of course, being wireless, you're not getting too tangled up in the cables.

The tall floorstanding front pair project a warm, full sound well into the room and integrate nicely with the smaller surround speakers, provided you take time to position them correctly. The subwoofer is also reasonably punchy and powerful, which helps to fill quite a large room with dynamic sound.

FEATURES

Round-up: Panasonic does well for multi-media playback but can't match the others for versatility. LG boasts Gracenote, Sony is 3D ready and Samsung has a handy HDMI in

LG HB-965TZ: 1 2 3 4 5

Panasonic SC-BT230: 1 2 3 4 5

Samsung HT-C6730: 1 2 3 4 5

Sony BDV-E370: 1 2 3 4 5

If there's a weak link, it's the centre channel, but by turning that up slightly, you can achieve a surprisingly full-on cinema performance that suits big action films very well.

Music also benefits from the extra pair of speakers that can be wired in at the front to suit the DPL IIz mode that adds an interesting vertical axis to the soundfield.

The Samsung's picture quality complements the dramatic sound with a clear and stable image that's as detailed and colourful as any of Samsung's stand-alone Blu-ray players. There's a slight rattle and hum from inside the machine, when it loads a disc, but it's not reflected in the picture at all.

LG's handsome speakers are a little quieter than Samsung's towers, but they too have the advantage of a stand mount that puts the drivers at just the right listening height. It means that you get a good cohesive surround effect as soon as you've set the speaker levels. There are five drive units in each tower and together

SAMSUNG HT-C6730

→ £600 Approx
→ www.samsung.co.uk

In brief

With an additional pair of wireless speakers giving a 7.1 system, Samsung is offering remarkable value for money. It's crammed with web features and finished in attractive casing too...

Slimline Samsung

A Dust magnet

A highly glossy finish looks great, but means bad news for the dust buster in the house

B Knock on wood

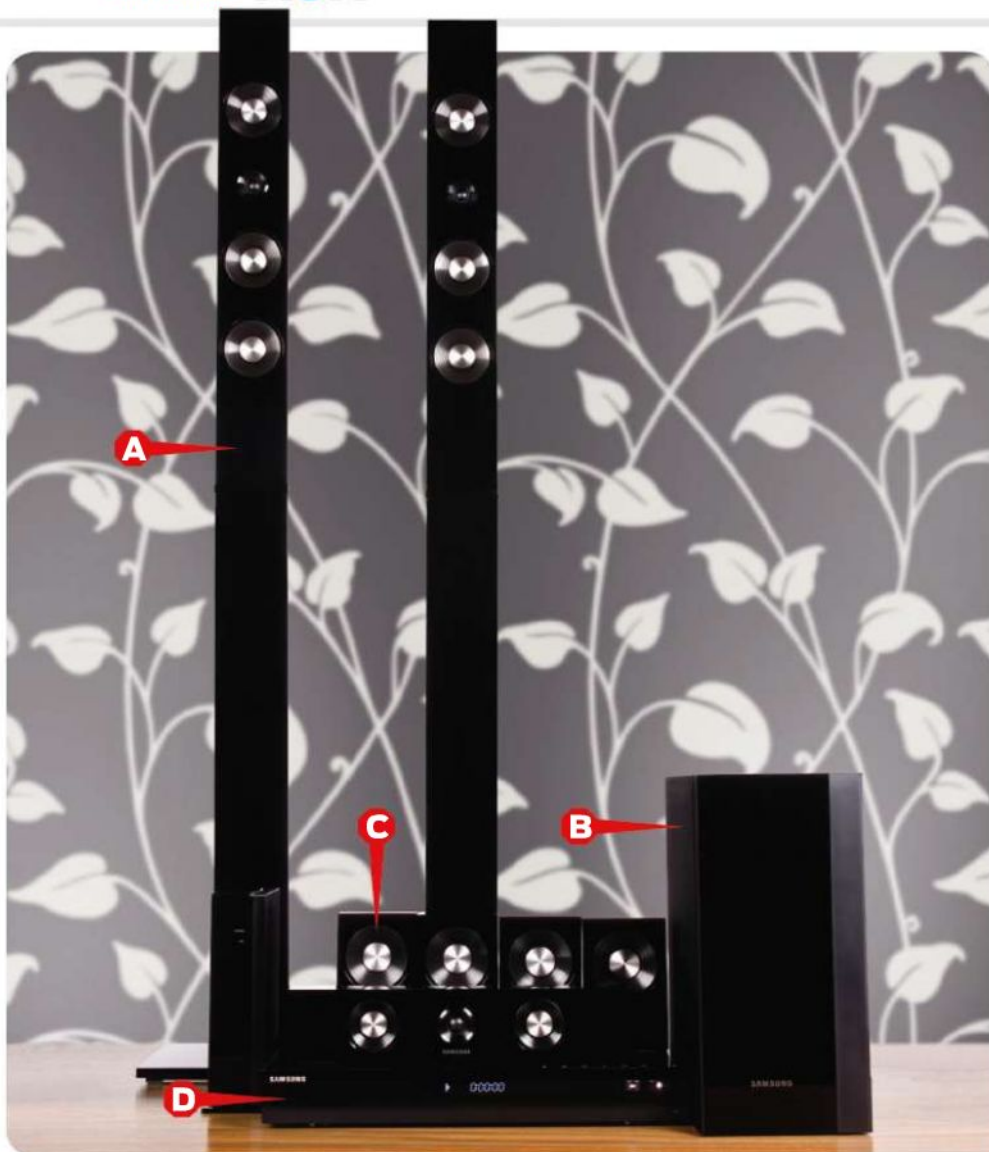
Samsung's GUI uses a cheesy wood-effect background

C 7.1 serving

Unusually, Samsung includes an extra pair of wired rear speakers to complement the wireless rears

D Go with the glow

Lightly pressing the Samsung's touch-sensitive buttons sparks the unit's glowing LED display into life



they produce an open and engaging sound with plenty of treble detail to convey the subtle surround effects on the *LOTR* discs.

There's a satisfying rumble from LG's subwoofer too. Like the others, it's a fairly lightweight plastic passive woofer, so it lacks the precision of an active box and can sound overblown and disjointed from the other speakers. But with the subwoofer set up properly, you'll get a very musical system that suits the Pink Floyd CD. The package can't match the Samsung for sheer volume.

In terms of picture quality, the LG shows slightly more grain in the picture and takes slightly longer to load and play a disc. On the plus side though, the user interface is much more appealing, so the overall user experience is very close.

Sony's slick interface, intuitive remote and sensible feature set combine to offer the best user experience, but not the best sonic performance. The little speakers with their dual drive units achieve a nicely

detailed sound that misses none of the subtleties of the *LOTR* soundtracks. But the squat subwoofer is just too flabby and underpowered to integrate, so the bass tends to sound disembodied when the action kicks in. The auto calibration does its best to integrate the LFE channel and it certainly takes a lot of the guesswork out of the setup procedure, but it's still not as seamless as the LG and Samsung systems. The tiny centre channel also struggles to deliver the crucial dialogue soundtrack.

Where it does excel is with the Pink Floyd CD. Music sounds crisp and dynamic through two speakers and, of course, the SACD soundtrack gives the Sony system an unfair advantage by extending the dynamic range a little in 5.1 mode.

The Sony's picture quality is satisfyingly sharp and vivid too. It does a good job of upscaling DVDs and Blu-ray at 24fps, looks very smooth. Even more pleasing is the BBC iPlayer app that looks

surprisingly accurate with a reasonable internet connection.

Panasonic's tiny speakers also do well to supply an intricately detailed top end. It's a shame you can't take off the grilles to see the bamboo drive units at work. What they can't do is give a fully integrated dynamic range, so what you get is a slightly splashy treble and flabby bass, with a weak mid range. This kind of tonal balance is not bad for delivering all the effects in an action-packed soundtrack, but it does get tiring if you're trying to drive a large room with surround sound. You'll find yourself turning the volume down to listen in comfort.

PERFORMANCE

Round-up: LG falls just shy of the Samsung, which couples the most involving sound with sparkling images. Sony lacks integration and Panasonic requires a lot of tinkering

LG HB-965TZ: 1 2 3 4 5

Panasonic SC-BT230: 1 2 3 4 5

Samsung HT-C6730: 1 2 3 4 5

Sony BDV-E370: 1 2 3 4 5

SONY BDV-E370 → £500 Approx → www.sony.co.uk



In brief

Sony's smart system can calibrate its own speakers using a bundled mic and offers some superb online features. It's all controllable via a typically slick Sony remote control and GUIs.

Stylish Sony

A Monolithic match

The combination of brushed metal and hard jutting edges is a design statement common to Sony's latest range of Bravia TVs

B Button frustration

Small black buttons on a black background aren't the easiest to locate – stick to the excellent XMB

C 3D ready

This box won't spin 3D Blu-ray discs, but Sony is promising a firmware update that will make it compatible with 3D in the future

D Small sounds

Those dinky speakers simply can't muster enough volume to provide a decent soundfield in a larger room. This system may be better suited to smaller rooms or a bedroom

Final Standings

Taking everything into account, it's the Samsung system that scores the most points overall. Wireless rear surround speakers give it a performance edge that delivers the most engaging surround sound. The absence of 3D playback is a shame, but with wi-fi built in and some useful web apps, it's got plenty of other features to shout about. Combine that with a sharp-looking Blu-ray picture and accurate DVD upscaling and you have an all-round winner.

LG's offering doesn't quite match the Samsung for thrilling sound effects, but it's

a close call and it actually has a smarter interface and a useful iPod dock thrown in.

Sony's system struggles to integrate its baggy bass in a large room, but could be just the thing for a bedroom. It's also the only all-in-one offering 3D Blu-ray playback and it has the best graphic interface, so it shouldn't be dismissed.

Panasonic's compact solution is cost-effective if you find it in one of the many deals that are being offered. The 1080p picture quality is spot on, but in other respects, it's out of its league here.

Panasonic's system offers some useful preset sound modes that will help you find the best balance, but this system is best suited to a small room or a bedroom.

Panasonic Blu-ray players tend to do well picture-wise and it's true here, too. This system has the most video processing to enhance the Blu-ray image and it looks very clean and colourful on screen. Upscaling from DVD is very good too. Panasonic's user interface is in need of an update and it's the most annoying system to set up and operate on a daily basis ●

1ST



HCC VERDICT

Samsung HT-C6730
£600 Approx

Highs: Wi-fi surround back speakers; room-filling sonic performance

Lows: Noisy disc mechanism; no 3D support

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

→ Specifications

Upscaling: Yes DVDs scaled to 720p/1080p

Multiregion: No Region B BD/R2 DVD

HDMI: Yes HDMI in and out
Component: Yes 1 component output

Multichannel phono audio: No
Digital audio: Yes 1 optical input

SACD/DVD-A: No
Dolby True HD/DTS HD decoding: Yes

Dolby True HD/DTS HD bitstream: Yes
Profile 2.0: Yes

Total amplification (claimed): 1330W (all speakers plus subwoofer)

Dimensions (main unit): 430(w) x 60(h) x 331(d)mm

Weight (main unit): 3.8kg

Features: eg: Ethernet, wi-fi; DLNA support; online content portal; additional file support (JPEG, AVCHD, DivX); DPL IIz audio processing; wireless surround back speakers

2ND



HCC VERDICT

LG HB-965TZ
£600 Approx

Highs: Decent speakers; open sound; excellent GUI; useful iPod dock

Lows: Apps are slow to open; occasional video jitter

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

→ Specifications

Upscaling: Yes DVDs scaled to 720p/1080p

Multiregion: No Region B BD/R2 DVD

HDMI: Yes HDMI out/2 in

Component: Yes 1 output

Multichannel phono audio: No

Digital audio: Yes 2 optical inputs

SACD/DVD-A: No

Dolby True HD/DTS HD decoding: Yes

Dolby True HD/DTS HD bitstream: Yes

Profile 2.0: Yes

Total amplification (claimed): 1100W RMS (all speakers plus subwoofer)

Dimensions (main unit): 439(w) x 66(h) x 284(d)mm

Weight (main unit): 4kg

Features: Ethernet, wi-fi; DLNA support; online content portal; additional file support (JPEG, AVCHD, DivX); iPod dock; audio presets

3RD



HCC VERDICT

Sony BDV-E370
£500 Approx

Highs: Superb GUI; good sound at low volume; SACD playback and unexpected bonus

Lows: Impractical fascia design; no HDMI input; disjointed bass

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

→ Specifications

3D: Yes

Upscaling: Yes DVDs scaled to 720p/1080p

Multiregion: No Region B BD/R2 DVD

HDMI: Yes HDMI output, but no input

Component: Yes 1 component output

Multichannel phono audio: No

Digital audio: Yes 2 optical inputs

SACD/DVD-A: No

Dolby True HD/DTS HD decoding: Yes

Dolby True HD/DTS HD bitstream: Yes

Profile 2.0: Yes

Total amplification (claimed): 850W RMS (all speakers plus subwoofer)

Dimensions (main unit): 406(w) x 50(h) x 513(d)mm

Weight (main unit): 3.5kg

Features: Ethernet, wi-fi; DLNA support; online content portal; BBC iPlayer; additional file support (JPEG, AVCHD, DivX)

4TH



HCC VERDICT

Panasonic SC-BT230
£400 Approx

Highs: Clear pictures; compact size; SD card slot; iPod dock

Lows: Clunky user interface; limited USB file support

Performance: 1 2 3 4 5

Design: 1 2 3 4 5

Features: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

→ Specifications

Upscaling: Yes DVDs scaled to 720p/1080p

Multiregion: No Region B BD/R2 DVD

HDMI: Yes HDMI in and out

Component: Yes 1 component output

Multichannel phono audio: No

Digital audio: Yes 2 optical inputs

SACD/DVD-A: No

Dolby True HD/DTS HD decoding: Yes

Dolby True HD/DTS HD bitstream: Yes

Profile 2.0: Yes

Total amplification (claimed): 1,000W RMS (all speakers plus subwoofer)

Dimensions (main unit): 430(w) x 54(h) x 287(d)mm

Weight (main unit): 3.1kg

Features: Ethernet; DLNA support; online content portal; additional file support (JPEG, AVCHD, DivX); iPod dock; audio presets

Perfect partners

Sevenoaks Sound & Vision | Audio T

REAL STORES • REAL PEOPLE • REAL PRODUCTS • REAL VALUE

SEVENOAKS
SOUND & VISION

audio T

SEVENOAKS SOUND & VISION AND AUDIO T
are in the process of merging their respective businesses.

IMPROVED NATIONAL COVERAGE

OUTSTANDING CUSTOMER SERVICE

WIDER PRODUCT SELECTION

DEDICATED DEMONSTRATION FACILITIES

UNBEATABLE PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE

CUSTOM INSTALLATION

**HOME
ENTERTAINMENT
THE MANCHESTER SHOW**

DON'T FORGET TO VISIT!

Renaissance Hotel, Blackfriars Street, Manchester, M3 2EQ **16-17 OCTOBER 2010**

In association with **WHAT HI-FI?**
SOUND AND VISION

For more details visit www.manchestershow.co.uk

SEVENOAKS
SOUND & VISION

SEVENOAKS STORES

ABERDEEN 01224 252797	CHELSEA 020 7352 9466	GUILDFORD 01483 536666	LOUGHTON 020 8532 0770	PLYMOUTH 01752 226011	SOUTHAMPTON 023 8033 7770
BRIGHTON HOVE 01273 733338	CHELTENHAM 01242 241171	HOLBORN 020 7837 7540	MAIDSTONE 01622 686366	POOLE 01202 671677	TUNBRIDGE WELLS 01892 531543
BRISTOL 0117 974 3727	EPSOM 01372 720720	KINGSTON 020 8547 0717	NORWICH 01603 767605	READING 0118 959 7768	WATFORD 01923 213533
BROMLEY 020 8290 1988	EXETER 01392 218895	LEEDS WETHERBY 01937 586886	NOTTINGHAM 0115 911 2121	SEVENOAKS 01732 459555	WITHAM ESSEX 01376 501733
CAMBRIDGE 01223 304770	GLASGOW 0141 332 9655	LINCOLN 01522 527397	OXFORD 01865 241773	SHEFFIELD 0114 255 5861	YEovil 01935 700078

IRELAND

Pricing in Ireland may vary from the UK

DUBLIN
01 275 1100

OPENING SOON

SUBJECT TO LEGAL COMPLETION

• **BEDFORD**
• **WEYBRIDGE**

audio T

AUDIO T STORES

BASINGSTOKE 01256 324311	BOLTON 01204 395789	CAMBERLEY 01276 685597	ENFIELD 020 8367 3132	MANCHESTER 0161 839 8869	PRESTON 01772 883958	SWINDON 01793 538222	WORCESTER 01905 619059
BLACKPOOL 01253 300599	BRENTWOOD 01277 264730	CARDIFF 029 2022 8565	LANCASTER 01524 39657	PORTSMOUTH 023 9266 3604	SWANSEA 01792 474608	WARRINGTON 01925 632179	

PLEASE NOTE

Audio T stores (not included above) close to an existing Sevenoaks Sound & Vision store ► **BRIGHTON** ► **BRISTOL** ► **CHELTENHAM** ► **EPSOM** ► **OXFORD** ► **READING** ► **SOUTHAMPTON** ► **TUNBRIDGE WELLS**, will carry an alternative product range, predominantly 2-channel. These stores will have their own dedicated website and advertising.

Until the merger is complete, which will take a few months, **Sevenoaks Sound & Vision** and **Audio T** will remain separate legal entities.

FOR LATEST PRICES, OFFERS & ON-LINE STORE VISIT

WWW.SSAV.COM

Perfect partners

SEVENOAKS
JOIN THE
3DTV
REVOLUTION
audioT

LCD & PLASMA SCREENS

Samsung **LED TV**
Next Generation TV



SAMSUNG

UE46C8000 3D TV

With a picture so stunning that it looks - and feels - more real than reality. Samsung's LED 8000 TV with its explosive 3D capabilities and immersive HyperReal Engine delivers the world as you've never seen it before.

PANASONIC

VIERA G20

42 46 50

These highly specified TVs feature Panasonic's NeoPDP plasma panels for breathtaking performance - whether you are watching movies, sports or gaming.

VIERA V20

46 50



NEW 3D
42" 6720 PLASMA TV
MODEL: TX-P42GT20

freesat HD

Freeview HD

NEOPDP

HOME CINEMA
BEST BUY

G20



PHILIPS

52PFL8605H 3D TV

Taking picture quality, excellence in sound and elegance in design to new heights, the Philips 8000 LED Series of TVs embodies both performance and style.

With an energy-efficient, ultra-slim screen, the Full HD 3D Ready 8000 series vividly brings entertainment to life and allows you to connect a whole range of online entertainment.

Featuring the distinctive halo of Ambilight Spectra 2, the 8000 series delivers an intense and cinematic experience.

Freeview

NEW

PROJECTORS

EPSON

EH-TW5500

Designed to bring outstanding quality to a budget-conscious home cinema enthusiast, the projector features full HD (1920 x 1080) resolution and a 200000:1 contrast ratio.



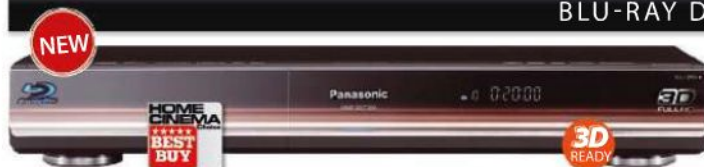
OPTOMA

HD20

HD82

These new full HD DLP projectors from Optoma combine great performance with outstanding value for money.

BLU-RAY DISC PLAYERS



PANASONIC

This new range includes the Full HD 3D capable DMP-BDT300 along with three conventional 2D players. All players blend comprehensive features, super-fast booting with superior sound and stunning HD-quality images.

DMP-BDT300

DMP-BD65

DMP-BD85

PIONEER

Get the most out of your movies with Pioneer's luxuriously designed BDP-330 and top-of-the-range BDP-LX53. Both models feature network functionality including YouTube browsing and RSS feeds.

DENON

Denon's new range of 3D ready, universal disc players, deliver high-end picture and sound quality.

SONY

Experience movies like never before. These new Blu-ray disc players let you watch your favourite movie moments in true full high definition with superior high resolution surround sound. Models include the 2D BDP-S370 and 3D ready BDP-S470 and BDP-S570.



BDP-330

BDP-LX53



DBP-1611UD

DBP-2011UD



BDP-S370

BDP-S570

PLEASE NOTE: SOME BRANDS/PRODUCTS ARE NOT AVAILABLE AT ALL STORES. SPECIAL/ADDED VALUE OFFERS ARE NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER (NICWAOO)

HOME CINEMA AMPLIFIERS & RECEIVERS

DENON

Denon's 2010 range of AV receivers continues to impress. The latest addition to the range is the 7-channel AVR-1911 which features full 3D connectivity and 3D surround sound options, along with HDMI v1.4a. Other models coming soon are the AVR-2311, AVR-3311 and AVR-4311.

AVR-1911	AVR-3311
AVR-2311	AVR-4311



ONKYO

Featuring the latest HDMI 1.4 inputs for simple hook-up of all your high-def sources. This new 7.2-channel receiver brings compatibility with the new 3D video format, is THX-Select2 Plus certified and delivers 100 watts per channel. In addition to its Dolby ProLogic IIz height processing, it also includes Audyssey DSX height and width processing capabilities.

TX-SR608	TX-NR808
TX-NR708	TX-NR1008

PIONEER

Experience film and music just as the creators intended with Pioneer's range of AV receivers.

VSX-920	SC-LX73
VSX-2020	SC-LX83



YAMAHA

Yamaha AV amplifiers and receivers are packed with features, offer excellent sound and represent outstanding value.

DSP-Z7	RX-V667
RX-V567	RX-V767

The range includes the new 3D-ready RX-V667 (below) and the YSP-4100/5100 soundbars.



HOME CINEMA SPEAKERS

MONITOR AUDIO



RADIUS HD
BRONZE BX
GOLD GS
PLATINUM



Q ACOUSTICS

2000 CINEMA PACK

Q Acoustics' engineers demanded unrivalled sonic performance and breathtaking value. With the award-winning 2000 Cinema Pack, their designers have surpassed themselves making it the natural choice for both home cinema enthusiasts and discerning music lovers.



SILVER RX6 AV12

Using techniques and materials from the Platinum and Gold ranges, the Silver RX series of slimline home cinema and hi-fi speakers are available in a choice of real wood veneers and high-gloss piano finishes to complement any room.



KEF

The KHT2005.3 packs KEF's sophisticated audio technology into a compact set of speakers.



KHT2005.3 KHT3005SE

YAMAHA

Improve your TV sound with a Digital Sound Projector - the 5100 is packed with HD decoders, HDMI switching and over 40 mini drivers.



YSP-4100 YSP-5100

B&W

These award-winning packages combine style with excellent sound.



MT-25 MT-30

ADVERT VALID UNTIL 15/10/2010, E&OE

this month's special

OFFERS

20% OFF



SPEAKERS RRP WHEN YOU PURCHASE ANY HI-FI AMPLIFIER OR A/V RECEIVER

Maximum speakers RRP £1000. Most, but not all brands included

ARCAM TRADE-IN OFFER
AVR500 A/V RECEIVER **£2199** **SAVE £356**

SONY
BDP-S570 3D BLU-RAY PLAYER **£199** **SAVE £30**

CLAIM FREE 3D READY BLU-RAY DISC PLAYER WORTH £339

WITH THESE SAMSUNG 3D LED TVs
UE40C7000 • UE46C7000
UE40C8000 • UE46C8000
MODEL: SAMSUNG BD-CJ900

SSAV.COM TO FIND OUT MORE

PANASONIC
DMP-BDT300 3D BLU-RAY DISC PLAYER **£369** **SAVE £30**

YAMAHA
YSP-4100 SOUND PROJECTOR **£1149** **SAVE £100**

CLAIM FREE PANASONIC DMP-BD65 BLU-RAY DISC PLAYER

OR UPGRADE TO A DMP-BDT300 3D BLU-RAY PLAYER FOR AN EXTRA £260 WHEN YOU PURCHASE A PANASONIC TX-P50VT20 3D READY TV

TX-P50VT20 **£2299**

BOSTON
SOUNDWARE XS 5.1 SPEAKER PACKAGE **£349** **SAVE £50**

Q ACOUSTICS
2000 CINEMA PACK (GRAPHITE) **£499** **SAVE £50**

PANASONIC
DMP-BD65 BLU-RAY PLAYER **£149** **SAVE £30**

HALF PRICE! **SAVE £215**

PIONEER
BDP-LX52 BLU-RAY DISC PLAYER **£275**

REL
R205 SUBWOOFER PIANO BLACK **£495**
R505 £749 SAVE £326 PIANO BLACK

PLEASE NOTE: PRICING IN IRELAND MAY VARY FROM THE UK

www.**AV4HOME**.co.uk
01623 672070

QUALITY FURNITURE CABLES & ACCESSORIES

The Alphason Range
of high quality, award
winning furniture has
a lifetime warranty

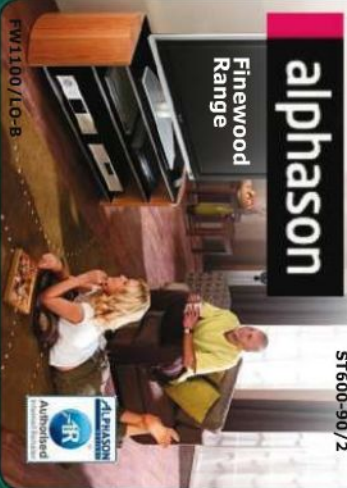


ARC800/3

ST600-90/2

alphason

Finewood
Range

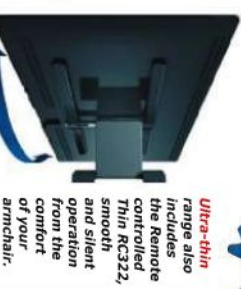


FW1100/LO-B



INTERNET PARTNER

The New Vogel's
Ultra-thin Series has
arrived! Featuring Super
flat mounts for the latest
ultra slim TV screens.



Ultra-thin mounts to suit all LED /
LCD screens upto 52inch and 25Kgs

SPEAKER WALL BRACKETS AND SPEAKER STANDS



BT114 - Onyx Stealth
Home cinema speaker
floor stand

Wall mounts for bookcase
and satellite speakers

Optimum
Modular
Speaker
Stand

A UNIQUE RANGE OF WALL PLATES,
FOR SKY +, FREESAT, HDMI, AV & PC



We also have a
comprehensive range of
speaker wallplates

Brush plates simplify
installation, saving
time & cable costs

Probably the widest range of
AV furniture, TV Stands, wall
mounts, cables & accessories
on show anywhere in the UK.

**GREAT SHOWROOM
VISIT US TODAY!**

29 - 36 Hallamway,
Old Mill Lane Business Park,
Mansfield Woodhouse, Notts. NG19 9BG.
(Approx 10 miles from M1 - Junction 28 or 29)

We have the Latest Designs in
stylish TV & AV stands from
leading manufacturers



Jual Curve JF-203

Atacama
Elara AV1000

**QED Speaker
cable - from
£1.00 per metre**



**QED HDMI
cables
from £23.95**

AV4Home awarded QED
Retailer of the Year 2008-9
Award winning products backed by quality
service and custom cable assembly

Our Home Theatre furniture display
includes one of the widest range of
BDI and other top quality brands on
show anywhere in the UK



Marina.8729-2GW



Mirage 8224
Gloss Black TV Cabinet

See our
Website for
more in the
New Valera
Range



Valera 9724CW

A Wide Range of
Styles in Cherry,
Espresso and
NEW Chocolate
Walnut Finishes



Avion 8928



Revo 9981

AV4HOME
01623 672070
sales@av4home.co.uk

UNRIVALLED CUSTOMER SUPPORT - FREE DELIVERY* - EXPERT ADVICE - INTERNET PRICES

*UK MAINLAND ONLY

PLAYBACK

→ **Software highlights** **KICK-ASS** The revenge of the puny weakling
CEMETERY JUNCTION Small-town, rites-of-passage nostalgia **ROBIN HOOD** Ridley Scott just can't
 say no to Russell Crowe **FORBIDDEN PLANET** BD transfer is exemplary
MARS ATTACKS! Tim Burton's confection is still crazy in HD **AND MUCH MORE!**

All dolled up

20th Century Fox → Region A/B Blu-ray

Is Dollhouse an underrated
 gem or a lip gloss fest?
 Find out in our in-depth
 Blu-ray review
 on page 89

HCC Ratings key

Jackie Chan	1 2 3 4 5
Spider-man	1 2 3 4 5
Javier Bardem	1 2 3 4 5
Zorro	1 2 3 4 5
Nicolas Cage	1 2 3 4 5



Comic thrills and spills

The Blu-ray of this comic book-styled movie kicks sand in the face of its detractors

Kick-Ass is not your typical superhero movie. After wondering why nobody has ever tried to be a superhero for real, teenage geek Dave Lizewski (Aaron Johnson) decides to give it a go with his alter-ego, Kick-Ass. Despite being pretty rubbish and regularly beaten up, a video clip of him in action makes the news and superhero fever breaks out.

Before long others join the fray, including the ultra-violent pairing of Big Daddy (Nic Cage channelling Adam West) and his foul-mouthed ten-year-old daughter, Hit-Girl (Chloe Moretz). But as far as crime boss Frank D'Amico (Mark Strong) is concerned, superheroes are bad for business, and he sets out to teach Kick-Ass a lesson about how things work in the real world.

Brash, funny and unrepentantly violent, *Kick-Ass* is an absolute joy from start to finish, unless you have no sense of humour, in which case it's possibly the most evil thing you'll ever watch.

Chris Jenkins: The AVC 2.40:1 1080p encode delivers an occasionally stunning, occasionally infuriating hi-def viewing experience, albeit one that would seem to accurately reflect the filmmakers' intentions. According to the director's commentary, 'we did a digital intermediate grade which film can't quite cope with, but HD can'. On this Blu-ray release that boils down to colours and brightness being boosted extremely high to give the film a hyper-real, comic book aesthetic. The result is extremely colourful and three-dimensional, but fine detail is sometimes lacking



HCC VERDICT

Kick-Ass → Universal Pictures
→ All-region BD → £25 Approx

We say: This twisted take on the superhero genre really kicks ass on Blu-ray

Picture: 1 2 3 4 5

Sound: 1 2 3 4 5

Extras: 1 2 3 4 5

Movie: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5



and the colours have been pushed so hot that blacks are often noisy or even run purple or blue. A case in point is the protagonist's weirdly coloured hair when he sits in front of the cafeteria windows towards the end of Chapter One.

Mark Craven: While the US release featured a lossless 7.1-channel mix, here in the UK we only get a DTS-HD MA 5.1 track. But, with that in mind, it's still a real thrill ride. Sure, there are a handful of scenes where rear ambience doesn't quite come to life as you'd expect, but as soon as the superheroics start (especially any time Hit-Girl starts, well, kicking ass) the mix offers everything you'd expect from booming bass to spot-on directional effects and cleanly rendered dialogue.

Anton van Beek: For some annoying reason Universal didn't pick up the rights to the picture-in-picture track that appeared on Lionsgate's US Blu-ray release, and which could surely have been easily transformed into one of the studio's U-Control features.

Oh well, at least the rest of the extras are all present and correct. While the director provides an informative commentary, it doesn't hold a candle to the fantastic Making of... documentary, *A New Kind of Super Hero*. Split into four parts and running for a full 113mins, this in-depth piece leaves no stone unturned as it details the film's production. Also included is a 21min featurette about the original comic book series, and a collection of five art and photo galleries should delight fans.

AfterLife

Anchor Bay → Region A/B BD
£20 Approx



After Anna Taylor (Christina Ricci) dies in a car accident, she wakes up in the morgue being tended

to by spooky mortician, Eliot Deacon (Liam Neeson). He claims he can talk to the dead and is trying to help her on her way, but Anna's convinced that she's still alive and he has far more sinister motives. With top performances from its two leads, *AfterLife* continually keeps you guessing and is one of the better psychological horrors to turn up in some time. It also looks fantastic, thanks to the Blu-ray's pin-sharp AVC 2.40:1 1080p encode, and features a lively uncompressed PCM 5.1 mix. **AvB**

1 2 3 4 5

Cemetery Junction

Optimum Home Ents → Region A/B
BD £25 Approx



Ricky Gervais' and Stephen Merchant's coming-of-age movie may have as much ambition as the

aimless layabouts in the dreary Reading suburb where this '70s comedy-drama is set, but it jogs along pleasantly enough. Its largely unknown cast is aided by an assured Ralph Fiennes, the perky Felicity Jones and a soundtrack by Slade.

The cinematic AVC 2.40:1 1080p image is bright, clean and colourful, and the DTS-HD MA 5.1 audio is more than adequate for the basic soundtrack. Extras include two commentaries and production featurettes. **CJ**

1 2 3 4 5

The Blind Side

Warner Home Video → All-region BD
£23 Approx



Despite its many award nominations on its cinema release, this is really no different from any

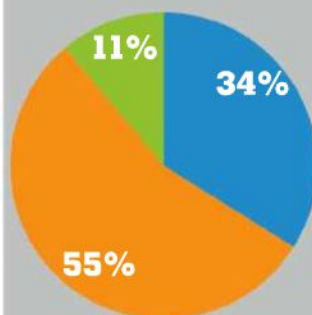
other supposedly inspirational movie based on a true story. Purporting to tell the rags-to-riches tale of professional footballer, Michael Oher, it's really about applauding the rich, white, God-fearing Tuohy family for taking in a poor, black teenager and turning his life around. There's no denying, though, that the VC-1 1.85:1 1080p encode is excellent, while the DTS-HD MA 5.1 audio is pleasingly atmospheric during the sports scenes. Extras include a collection of interviews. **AvB**

1 2 3 4 5

We asked you...

Will you watch the original *Star Wars* trilogy if it's re-released in cinemas in 3D?

■ Yes
■ No
■ Only if Solo shoots first!



Results of poll from
www.homecinemachoice.com

The memory lingers on

Sci-fi and action rolled into one TV series that nearly didn't get a second season



Dollhouse: Season Two

shouldn't really exist. Viewing figures for Joss Whedon's latest series were easily low enough for cancellation, but the studio decided to risk a second batch of 13 episodes. And thank heavens they did. While the initial series was intriguing but rather formulaic, this time around it really picks up the pace, throwing in twist after twist and keeping fans on the edge of their seats. It might have been a short ride, but *Dollhouse* eventually became a great little action-sci-fi series with a wonderful and fitting end.

Mark Craven: The second season makes a splash in hi-def with an AVC 1.78:1 1080p encode that's almost as attractive as the show's leading lady. While I have encountered some better-looking TV to Blu-ray transfers in the past, the overall depth, clarity and colour delineation exhibited by this

high-definition version of the series is undoubtedly impressive. If there's one complaint, it's that there's an inconsistency in fine detail across the series. Whether this is down to the source material or the encode itself is unknown, but it does mark the show down against other comparable titles.

Steve May: The DTS-HD MA 5.1 mix is much like most other network action shows: a forward facing sound mix with close mic'd dialogue and sporadic surround sound steerage. In truth there's little in these episodes to warrant the deeper bit bucket offered by the lossless DTS format, but the quality of the video remains a good enough reason to step-up to BD. For a more cinematic



I thought these colours for the curtains



presentation I'd recommend applying a level of THX post processing.

Anton van Beek: Three of the episodes (two on Disc One and one on Disc Three) feature informative audio commentaries that provide a good balance of behind-the-scenes info and chat. Better still are the 13min *Defining Moments* and 16min *Looking Back*, the first a candid look at the making of the season from renewal to cancellation, and the second a post-cancellation roundtable with Joss Whedon and the actors. ➤

HCC VERDICT

20th Century Fox → Region A/B
BD → £35 Approx

We say: Bows out with an excellent run of episodes.

Picture: 1 2 3 4 5

Sound: 1 2 3 4 5

Extras: 1 2 3 4 5

Movie: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5



'We are in fact not God'

Still grainy, even on Blu-ray, but you wouldn't want this sci-fi classic any other way



HCC VERDICT

Forbidden Planet
Warner Home Video →
All-region BD
£18 Approx

We say: It's been a long time coming, but this Blu-ray presentation is everything sci-fi fans have been hoping for

Picture: 1 2 3 4 5

Sound: 1 2 3 4 5

Extras: 1 2 3 4 5

Movie: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

Forbidden Planet is a true classic of the science-fiction genre. Not content with simply throwing a bunch of spaceships and monsters on screen (although it certainly has both of those), it merges all of its heroics, spectacle and horror into one surprisingly complex concept that takes its inspiration from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

Two hundred years in the future, the United Planets Cruiser C-57D arrives at Altair IV to find out what happened to an earlier expedition. Touching down on the planet's surface, Captain Adams (Leslie Nielsen) is amazed to discover that not only are there survivors, but that something connected to a long-dead alien race might never let any of them leave.

Chris Jenkins: To all intents and purposes, this appears to be exactly the same VC-1 2.40:1 1080p encode that appeared on the US HD DVD released

at the tail end of 2006. But that's no bad thing, as it's still a fantastic representation of how the film should look and is easily the most impressive version I've ever come across. The aspects that really strike you about the imagery are how grainy it is (it's supposed to look like that) and how fresh the colours are in the Technicolor cinematography. Best of all, there are next to no blemishes or marks thanks to Warner's meticulous restoration work, making this *Forbidden Planet* one you'll want to revisit time and time again.

Mark Craven: While the HD DVD version mentioned above only offered a Dolby Digital Plus 5.1 remix, this Blu-ray transfer trumps it with a truly lossless DTS-HD MA version. But don't expect too much from the mix, as it's naturally limited by the quality of the source material. As such, use of the surrounds is sporadic at best and bass response is pretty flat. The decision not to include the original soundtrack alongside the fancy 5.1 remix, though, is something that may upset a few audio purists.

Anton van Beek: There's nothing on this Blu-ray that fans who picked up either the two-disc Special Edition DVD or HD DVD won't have seen before, but it's still great to have them all here, albeit in 480p SD. They include: the 56min documentary *Watch the Skies!: Science Fiction, the 1950s and Us*; the documentary *Amazing! Exploring the Far Reaches of the Forbidden Planet*; the featurette *Robby the Robot: Engineering a Sci-Fi Icon*; trailers; 11 deleted scenes; lost footage (test shots, matte paintings, etc.), the 1957 sci-fi flick *The Invisible Boy*; two short *Forbidden Planet*-themed excerpts from episodes of the *MGM Parade* TV show and an episode of *The Thin Man* TV series.

La Planete Sauvage

Eureka → Region B BD
£23 Approx



The 1973 animated feature (aka *Fantastic Planet*) by René Laloux, makes for another striking

addition to Eureka's Masters of Cinema Blu-ray lineup. As expected, the AVC 1.66:1 1080p imagery is the biggest selling point, with the distinctive hand-drawn animation looking more precisely rendered and richer than ever. Audio comes in delightful DTS-HD MA 2.0 versions of the original French track and the US English-language dub. Extras include five short films by Laloux, including his classic giant snail animation, *Les Escargots*. **AvB**

1 2 3 4 5

Mars Attacks!

Warner Home Video → All-region BD
£18 Approx



While Tim Burton's film is still a lot of inconsequential, silly fun, this Blu-ray's VC-1 2.40:1 1080p

encode will quickly turn your smile upside down. Because, while the movie's gaudy neon palette is handled brilliantly, the shine is taken off the HD visuals by thick edge enhancement haloes that even prove distracting on a 40in TV. Couple that with a dollop of noise reduction and images really don't look as they should. Almost as disappointing is the complete lack of bonus features on the disc. Still, at least the DTS-HD MA 5.1 lives up to expectations. **AvB**

1 2 3 4 5

Dr Who: Time and the Rani

2entertain Ltd → Region R2 DVD
£20 Approx



In this dismal story the Rani steals assorted genii to power a big brain that she's built. Cue

McCoy's pratfalls every five minutes and Bonnie Langford 'screeaming'. The entire DVD package is the real star here, particularly the commentary track and 30min documentary showing the behind-the-scenes manoeuvring during Sylvester McCoy's tenure as the Doctor, and also includes some fantastic screen tests for the role. Other extras include: interviews about the production, location footage, a photo gallery and trivia subtitles. **AvB**

1 2 3 4 5

Beyond the Rave

4DVD → Region R2 DVD
£13 Approx



Despite the good intentions of all involved and how pleasing it is to see the Hammer name

back on our screens, this web series is no return to the studio's glory days. Loud, brash and never once remotely scary, the story that unfolds is so dull and the characters so unlikeable that it's impossible to connect with the material. Also annoying is watching the series on DVD and having the titles flash up every time another new episode starts. On a positive note, the anamorphic 2.35:1 transfer is fine and there's a decent set of extras including a bonus episode. **AvB**

1 2 3 4 5

He shot the sheriff...but he didn't shoot no deputy



Serf's up!

Everyone's favourite archer saddles up to save the realm

Robin Hood: Director's Cut

finds director Ridley Scott teaming up again with Russell Crowe, for another historical epic, this time attempting to reveal the truth behind the legend of Sherwood Forest's most famous archer.

Crowe plays Robin Longstride, a soldier in Richard the Lionheart's army, who returns home following the death of his King, only to find the country under the tyrannical reign of Prince John and in danger of being invaded by the French.

Full of mud, downtrodden peasants and epic battles, there's much to enjoy in this alternate take on the material. But would it really have hurt them to add a little humour to the mix?

Chris Jenkins: Just like one of Robin Hood's arrows, Universal's hi-def presentation hits the bull's-eye every time. Encoded in MPEG4 AVC, the 2.40:1 1080p imagery is simply incredible. Every frame is packed with fine detailing, picking out every link in the chain mail. Check out the slow-motion shot of our hero emerging from the water during the battle in Chapter 18 to see how spectacular it looks, with each individual drop of water in the spray picked out with absolute clarity and precision. This also gives the imagery tremendous depth, as brilliantly demonstrated in the long shot of the army massing at Barnsdale at the start of Chapter 14.

Mark Craven: The movie's DTS-HD Master Audio 5.1 mix is about as subtle as

a crossbow bolt in the face – and all the more fun for it. The surround channels are almost in constant use, with various effects (horse whinnies, clanking metal, etc) layered on thick; the battle scenes dazzle for their aural complexity and the LFE channel rumbles into action at the drop of a hat. Only the score from composer Marc Streitenfeld disappoints; it's the kind of old-world, drum-laden, brass-saturated fare that Hollywood has applied to all its historical epics since *Braveheart*.

Anton van Beek: In addition to including both the 140min Theatrical Version and 156min Director's Cut (via seamless branching), the Blu-ray disc also contains the kind of interactive extras we've come to expect from Ridley Scott's films. U-Control functions appear in the form of the PiP Director's Notebook, which is packed with interviews and behind-the-scenes footage, while *The Art of Nottingham* is split into four categories (Pre-Vis/Storyboards, Production Design, Costumes and Behind the Scenes Photos) each offering numerous galleries of imagery that can be selected individually or run as slideshows. The discs also offer a BD-Live link and My Scenes functions.

If you still want more, there's also a DVD bundled in the set. Here you'll find 10 deleted scenes (not present in either cut), plus the 63min doc *Rise and Rise Again: Making Ridley Scott's Robin Hood*.



HCC VERDICT

Robin Hood: Director's Cut → Universal Pictures → All-region BD/R2 DVD £25 Approx

We say: Makes for a stunning Blu-ray showcase.

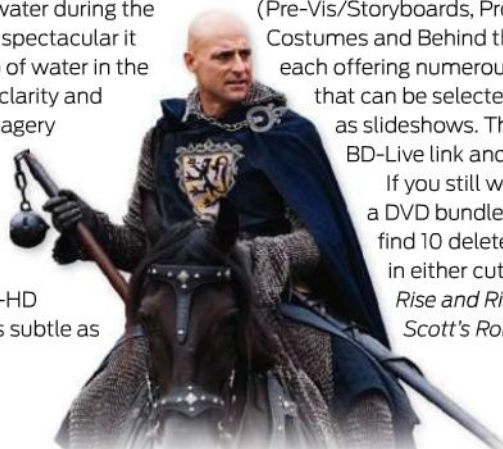
Picture: 1 2 3 4 5

Sound: 1 2 3 4 5

Extras: 1 2 3 4 5

Movie: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5



Grade 'A' frolics

The award-winning TV series transfers to Blu-ray and it's a blast

Glee: The Complete First Season is one of those rare TV phenomena that manages to be insanely popular, while also proving to be pretty damn entertaining. Sure, with all of the singing and dancing, it's easy to mistake *Glee* for *High School Musical* the TV series. But thanks to the guidance of co-creator Ryan Murphy, *Glee* is invested with a sharp and edgy sense of humour. This is best embodied by the fantastic Jane Lynch as gung-ho cheerleader coach, Sue Sylvester, spouting lines like, 'I will go to the animal shelter and get you a kitty cat. I will let you fall in love with that kitty cat. And then on some dark cold night, I will steal away into your home, and punch you in the face'.

Chris Jenkins: If, like me, you've only watched the show in SD on TV up until now, then this hi-def release is nothing short of a revelation. Each of the 22 episodes features an eye-searing AVC 1.78:1 1080p encode, bursting with beautifully rendered primary colours, crisp delineation and fine detail. There's very

occasional colour banding, but overall *Glee* looks gorgeous on its HD debut.

Mark Craven: Your appreciation of *Glee*'s DTS-HD Master Audio 5.1 tracks will undoubtedly come down to your expectations of TV material and your understanding of the show. For the most part, the audio is locked on the front of the soundstage, with the rears left to handle subtle atmospheric effects. Things step up a gear with the musical numbers, but even here

the rears are only really used to further surround you with the music, rather than provide any real dynamic effects. What really impresses, though, is the extra range and fidelity provided by the lossless presentation, which really adds to the quality of the music.

Anton van Beek: This four-disc set offers a reasonable batch of extras. Present on all of the discs is a Jukebox function providing direct links to all 100 songs featured in the series. Disc One also serves up a visual cast and crew commentary for the Pilot, although oddly, not via Profile 1.1. The remaining material on Disc Four includes a couple of excellent longer featurettes looking at the Madonna episode and the creation of the Bohemian Rhapsody finale.



The invitation said 'vicars and tarts'

HCC VERDICT

Glee: The Complete First Season → 20th Century Fox → Region A/B BD £50 Approx

We say: Looks and sounds good

Picture: 1 2 3 4 5

Sound: 1 2 3 4 5

Extras: 1 2 3 4 5

Movie: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

The Third Man

Optimum → Region B BD £25 Approx



Carol Reed's captivating post-war thriller is a fine addition to Optimum's Studio

Canal Collection of Blu-rays, even if the AVC 1.33:1 1080p imagery lacks some of the sharpness of the 2008 US hi-def release. The quality is still very high and far better than previous DVD versions. Curiously, Studio Canal's DTS-HD MA 2.0 mono mix is an improvement, seeming more robust and detailed than other versions. A generous package of extras includes interviews with Joseph Cotton and Graham Greene, an tour of locations in Vienna and even an episode of the 1950s radio series. **MC**



Breathless

Optimum → Region A/B BD £25 Approx



Jean-Luc Godard's Sixties underworld romance draws on the mythology of American cinema,

while breaking all the conventions of shooting and editing with its hand-held camerawork and jump-cuts. Seductive Jean Seberg and surly Jean-Paul Belmondo's performances stand out, but Paris is the true star.

The luminously monochrome 1.33:1 1080p image captures the full dynamic range of the image, while retaining the original film grain, and the DTS-HD MA 2.0 sound is scratchy, but captures the quirky soundtrack. Generous extras include an intro by Colin McCabe. **CJ**



Mulholland Drive

Optimum → Region B BD £25 Approx



David Lynch's surreal film noir recounts the downfall of an ambitious Hollywood actress (Naomi

Watts), but flips from reality to nightmarish dreamscape with typically Lynchian freedom. Littered with symbolism and film references, it's as puzzling as its key blue box.

A fine 1080p 1.85:1 transfer captures bright colours in fantasy sequences, and lush darkness in reality. Nuances of the complex soundtrack are brought out by a clean DTS-HD MA 5.1 audio track. Generous extras include behind-the-scenes docs and an English-subtitled explanation of the plot. **CJ**



Se7en

Warner Home Video → All-region BD £18 Approx



I was blown away by this superlative Blu-ray release. Not only does it cram in every extra from New

Line's Platinum Edition DVD (including four commentaries, deleted scenes, extensive galleries, and even the video and audio remastering featurettes done for that release), but it also boasts the best-looking transfer of the film I've ever seen. Overseen by Fincher himself, the new VC-1 2.40:1 1080p encode packs in loads of fine detail, and had also been completely overhauled to deliver an image much more in keeping with the CCE silver retention process used on initial first run prints. **AvB**



The Horde

Momentum Pictures → R2 DVD
£16 Approx



Cops and criminals are forced to team up against the undead in this high-octane horror from French

directors Yannick Dahan and Benjamin Rocher. But this movie is less interested in pushing boundaries than in living up to the 'badass' tag that the cast and crew allude to in the *Making of...* featurette. While it's not brain food, the constant fighting and shooting ensures that *The Horde* hits the spot as a piece of adrenaline-fuelled horror. The anamorphic 2.35:1 transfer is finely detailed and copes well with the fast action, while the 5.1 audio (in French and an English dub) is dynamic. **AvB**

1 2 3 4 5

14 Blades

Icon → Region B BD
£18 Approx



It's great to see martial artist Donnie Yen finally getting the recognition he deserves; we just

wish it was in better films than this. Yen is as watchable as ever, but the story – honourable military man is betrayed by his superiors and swears revenge – is as clichéd as they come. The CG effects are woeful, too, and the decision to cast a former Miss Hong Kong with no martial arts skills as Yen's main opponent is just ludicrous. Meanwhile the DTS-HD MA 5.1 Mandarin mix is dynamic, but the AVC 2.35:1 1080p visuals are let down by overzealous noise reduction and glaring edge enhancement. **AvB**

1 2 3 4 5

The Storm Warriors: Ultimate Edition

Cine Asia → Region All-region BD
£25 Approx



This belated follow-up to the 1998 effects-laden Wuxia martial arts film,

The Storm Riders, finds The Pang Brothers at the helm and borrowing plenty of stylistic cues from *300*. Most of the time *The Storm Warriors* is a fun ride, but towards the end it goes wildly off the rails by setting up yet another sequel. That said, the AVC 2.35:1 1080p visuals are electrifying – packed with fine detail and bold colours – while the Cantonese DTS-HD MA 5.1 mix never lets up. Extras include a fact-packed commentary by HK film expert Bey Logan. **AvB**

1 2 3 4 5

Inferno

Arrow Video → All-region BD/R0
DVD → £23 Approx



Argento's first *Suspria* sequel is a stunning series of horror set pieces that makes up for its lack

of narrative cohesion with a surfeit of style and suspense. The Blu-ray disc features an AVC 1.85:1 1080p encode that copes extremely well with the bold colour palette, and while there's less grain than expected, it's hard to tell if this is down to DNR tinkering or the diffuse visual style. The English audio comes in DTS-HD MA 5.1 and DTS 2.0. The Blu-ray also serves up some intriguing extras, and there's also a bonus DVD with additional documentaries and trailers. **MC**

1 2 3 4 5

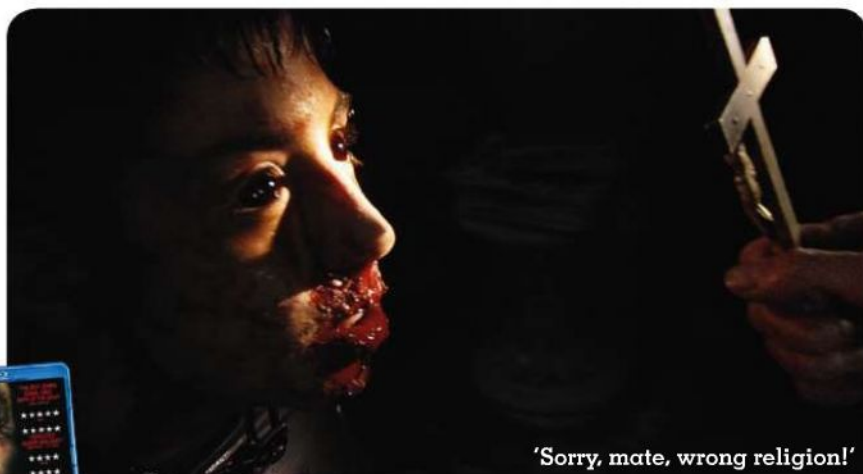
Zombie's gritty style displays true gore

With its shaky camera work, this all-action horror manages to keep the fear levels high

[Rec]2 is to Spanish horror sensation *[Rec]* what *Aliens* was to *Alien*; an intelligent attempt at building on the original, while adding interesting new wrinkles to the narrative, without detracting from what made the first film so perfect. Picking up almost immediately where the original ends, *[Rec]2* presents us with two different points-of-view: that of a SWAT team breaching the infected building on a top-secret mission and a group of kids trying to find out what's going on. By upping the action ante and exploring the origin of the infection, it manages to avoid being a simple reread and packs in plenty of surprises.

Chris Jenkins: *[Rec]2*'s AVC 1.78:1 1080p encode offers a mix of the good, the bad and the ugly. The main camera following the SWAT team provides the best imagery by far, with spectacular delineation and some very impressive detailing. The team's helmet-cams provide rather less impressive footage, with obvious fringing and macro blocking. However, the kids' cheap Handycam looks by far the worst, being prone to crushed blacks and a lack of clarity on top of the problems mentioned above. But, this is exactly what the filmmakers were going for, and while it won't win any cinematography awards, this Blu-ray is a perfect reflection of the film's deliberate aesthetic style.

Mark Craven: This disc's Spanish-language DTS-HD Master Audio 5.1 mix is just as aggressive as the raging zombies in the film. Every shriek and scream registers at, frankly, startling high frequency without a trace of distortion, while a continual bass-throb builds atmosphere and keeps your subwoofer busy. On top of this, the surrounds are constantly engaged with localised



'Sorry, mate, wrong religion!'

audio, from the voices of the SWAT team calling to one another, to a helicopter flyby, or hordes of the undead chasing through the building. The only minor niggle is that there's sometimes so much going on that it can bury the dialogue. But, thankfully, the fact the film is subtitled in the UK means this isn't a big issue.

Anton van Beek: There are only four extras on offer, but don't let that put you off as the first is a superb 113min *Making of...* documentary that covers pretty much everything a fan would think they'd need to know about how the film was created. But then the *Making of...* is followed up by a further 53min documentary, which takes you behind-the-scenes of specific sequences in the film, providing even more information about the effort involved in bringing them to life. Rounding things off are some extended and deleted scenes. All of the extras are presented in 1080i.

HCC VERDICT

[Rec]2 → E1
Entertainment → Region
B BD → £23 Approx

We say: One of the best horror sequels in years

Picture: 1 2 3 4 5

Sound: 1 2 3 4 5

Extras: 1 2 3 4 5

Movie: 1 2 3 4 5

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5

Feedback

Got an axe to grind? Want to comment on current technology? Need to share? **HCC** is here to help

Nothing but the best

In *Feedback* in HCC #185 you published Jonny Wilkinson's suggestion that you concentrate on normal systems instead of aspirational systems in custom installs. Well, I am probably as mature and intelligent as Jonny claims to be and think that HCC has the balance just right! When buying glossy magazines I expect to read about the very best equipment.
Paul Metson, Harrogate

Thanks Paul. Glad you like the high-end product reviews – although we're not sure we'd class ourselves as a glossy magazine! Also, in response to your previous letter about projector screens – we took your advice onboard. Head over to page 22 for our in-depth guide.

Better back up?

After I have recorded a movie or TV programme that I want to keep, I edit out the ads and any other rubbish and burn it to a DVD. Are there any hard drive back-up devices that I could use to archive them to, other than just another HD recorder, or is that the only choice?

Mark Renton, via email

This has for long been a sore point with us. Even if your machine's HDD crashes or 'dies' within the guarantee period, the manufacturer is under no obligation to restore your recordings. And so you have no alternative, but to backup everything of importance onto DVDs (you could copy these discs to your computer, if further security is needed). We asked Panasonic, the UK's leading manufacturer of HDD/DVD recorders, whether it would consider



adding a feature that would allow you to back up recordings to an external HDD via USB. After all, most of the machines it has been selling for several years have such a port. The company told us that it had no plans to introduce such a function, even if such HDDs had to be specialised Panasonic products and were 'tied in' to the owner of a specific recorder.

We sincerely hope that,

Panasonic – and, for that matter, other manufacturers – will relent to consumer pressure and change their minds. In the meantime, why not consider the combination of a PC equipped with digital TV tuners and a media-streaming device? I have successfully been using such a setup for several years now, and it's fairly easy to back up recordings to a USB HDD. With the appropriate software, making high-quality DVDs

Hard fact: there's no way to add an external HDD via USB

from your recordings is a doddle too.

Level with me

Hi, I hope you can put my mind at rest. I keep reading about worsening black levels on Panasonic plasma models. Without mentioning forum names, what I have read seems to be on US models. Will my Panasonic plasma UK model



Blu-ray: is it such a bad deal?

I read with some interest the letter from 'Anonymous' regarding the Blu-ray format in HCC #185.

As a chronic early adopter, I wanted a high-definition disc player from the first time I saw a demonstration back in 2003. I was given pause by the HD DVD/Blu-ray format war, and again, after BD triumphed, by the fact that it was clearly a format still in development.

I think they've just about finished it now. So, despite Blu-ray's 'launch' in 2006, it's only now possible to be confident of going into a retailer, and having a vague chance of leaving with a player that will be compatible with a suitable screen, and the ability to play most of the latest software glitch-free.

Now, I appreciate that continual change in

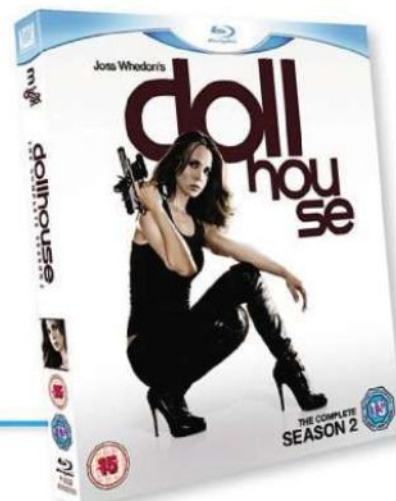
technology is great for magazines such as yours, and that, where it connects directly to improved performance, it's welcome and exciting.

However, I do think the balance you have to strike between the manufacturers and the consumers needs constant attention. I agree with a lot of what 'Anonymous' said, and I think your response was unduly dismissive.

The truth is, there's a lot about Blu-ray that is less than perfect, and the average punter's frustration at the format's long gestation and constantly 'evolving' specifications have been handled in a rather cavalier fashion by its principal proponents.

Julian, via email

We'll take your comments on board, Julian. Of course, the big problem here is the sheer pace of development. Thirty years ago, a high-tech product like a VCR may have been sold over a three-year period and supported with spares for at least five years afterwards. Today, you'll find the average CE product in the shops for a



Sign up to HCC online!

Don't be an Alan Smithee! Joining *Home Cinema Choice's* online community is free, fast and fun

On the home page of www.homecinemachoice.com, scroll down the right-hand side of the page until you see the Login box. Click the *Join Here* button, choose a username and then create your profile. You can upload an image to represent you online and use your signature to tell fellow AV fans about your own system automatically every time you post. Joining the big AV debate online has never been easier!



TH-50PZ800 have problems in the future, or still have good blacks after a year and half? I just read your review of the Panasonic TX-P50VT20B, which I am interested in buying, and I am concerned by these problems people are experiencing.

Again, we went straight to Panasonic for an answer on this, and got the following reply: 'Consumer satisfaction with our VIERA sets has been very high and we are confident in their picture quality. All displays have characteristics that change over time. Panasonic has incorporated a

feature that makes adjustments to maintain excellent picture quality. One aspect of this feature results in very small changes to black levels. The VIERA sets work as they were designed to and, even with the designed-in changes, provide outstanding performance.'

So, yes, Panasonic admits that it's black levels do decrease over time, but says it's a 'very small' change.

Hands off my installs

I just wanted to add my penny's worth to some comments made in a letter published in HCC #185 concerning the reviewing of console games.

The writer said he would like to see more game reviews, using space created by sacrificing the custom-fit £100,000 plus home cinema installs. Now I hope you didn't think too long about this proposal, because I love seeing these exotic installs and the amazing things that are possible with the right amount of dosh. We can all dream and we can all buy lottery tickets!

I have seen and heard a few games through some home cinema systems and they can be pretty amazing. However, if you do decide to start reviewing games please don't sacrifice pages that other people love your magazine for.

By the way, what's happened to the AV-holics? I like that too!

Finally, any idea when the UK is likely to see *Cast Away* and *American Psycho* on Blu-ray? These titles have been available in the States for eons.

Terry Wells, via email

Fear not, Terry, we're not about to ditch our custom install

focus in favour of games reviews – The Beek was simply asking whether enough of us use our home cinemas for gaming to warrant some coverage.

Also, not all of the installs we feature are £100,000 and above – we regularly feature rooms at the lower end of the market, too. As for AV-Holics, it's back this month after a brief hiatus!

Regarding those two BD titles, both are Region A only, so you can't import them to work on your Region B Blu-ray player (it's always worth investigating this, as many BDs are region-free. Search on www.blu-ray.com to find out).

Short of getting a multi-region deck, you'll have to wait a while for either *Cast Away* or *American Psycho* BDs in the UK, as there's no word at all on European release dates. Sorry!

Get set, go!

Hi, I'm looking for a set of surround speakers (around £700–£1,000) to partner with an Onkyo SR-TX608 receiver. Any suggestions? Guidera, via email

People's taste in speakers varies quite a lot, so it's always best to try and get a demo of any set before you buy.

Packages in this price range that we'd recommend checking out include KEF's C Series, which you can get for around £850. This was our award-winner in the sub-£2,000 category. It not only sounds great, but is excellent value for money, too.

If you don't want, or can't accommodate, floorstanders, then consider Monitor Audio's Vector 5.1 package, Wharfedale's Diamond 10 HCP, and Q Acoustics' 2000 Series (all are available for around £600), and Acoustic Energy's brilliant Aegis Neo V2 system, which costs closer to the £1,000 mark.

Write to Letters, Home Cinema Choice, Future Publishing, 2 Balcombe Street, London NW1 6NW, or email us at hcc@futurenet.co.uk. Due to the volume of letters we receive we cannot guarantee to print/answer them all.

Looking to buy a new TV?

NEW TV is the ultimate screen buying guide. Packed with in-depth reviews of the very latest models and crammed full of indispensable advice on every aspect of telly technology, it's the only magazine you'll need to read before purchasing your new set.



Over 100 TVs tested!

ON SALE NOW

year before it's replaced by something that usually does more for less, a strategy known as 'planned obsolescence'.

CE is now also a business where products are often launched before they're entirely ready, and this applies to Blu-ray, which was released before it was finished to head off competition from HD DVD.

Saying that, we do feel the performance benefits of BD are often overlooked. Yes, it's slow to load, region-coded and permanently evolving, but we can't help but love it.

Winner: Star Letter writer Julian wins a copy of *Dollhouse Season 2* on Blu-ray, courtesy of 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment. Its available to buy from 11 October for £35 approx.

Subscribe today

and get a
**TrickleStar
TV Trickle
Saver that'll
save pounds!**



Subscribe to *Home Cinema Choice* for just £11.88 per quarter by Direct Debit and get the TrickleSaver. Plus, get every issue of *HCC* for 15% less than the cover price!



About the TV TrickleSaver

The TV TrickleSaver reduces the standby energy consumed by TV accessories. The product has inbuilt current sensing circuitry to sense when a TV is on or off. When the TV is on, the product will switch on all peripheral devices. Conversely, when the TV is off, the product will switch off all accessories.

- Easy to install
- Provides simple automation to reduce wasteful standby energy consumption

- The product can be connected directly to equipment or connected to a standard electrical powerstrip with a number of connected devices.

Please visit www.tricklestar.com to see how the device works.



How to subscribe...

Order online at:

www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk/HCC/HCCP15

Call 0844 848 2852 (quoting code HCCP15)

Lines open Monday-Friday 8am-9.30pm,
Saturday 8am-4pm

Or return the FREEPOST form opposite

Why subscribe?

- Get the TrickleStar TV TrickleSaver when you pay by Direct Debit
- Pay 15 per cent less than the shop price
- Never miss an issue of HCC
- Get 13 issues per year delivered straight to your door



www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk/HCC/HCCP15

I'd like to subscribe to **HOME CINEMA CHOICE** and get an eco-friendly TrickleStar TV Tricklesaver

UK PRICING

☐ I'd like to pay £11.88 quarterly Direct Debit and get TV Tricklesaver

OVERSEAS PRICING

For overseas rates please go to www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk

PERSONAL DETAILS

Title Forename
Surname
Address
Postcode
Telephone
If you'd like to receive emails and SMS from HCC and Future Publishing and its group companies containing news, specials offers and product and service information, please include your email and mobile no. below.
Email
Mobile no.

PAYMENT DETAILS

I would like to pay £11.88 per quarter by Direct Debit (UK only) AND get a TrickleStar TV Tricklesaver ☐

Please complete the Direct Debit form



Originator's Identification Number
768195



Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay Direct Debits

To the Manager (Bank name)

Address

Postcode

Name(s) of account holder(s)

Branch sort code

Bank/Building Society account number

Ref No. (Office use only)

Signature(s)

Date

Please pay Future Publishing Direct Debits from the account detailed on this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Future Publishing and if so, details will be passed electronically to my bank or building society.

POST YOUR ORDER

RETURN THIS FORM FREEPOST TO:
HOME CINEMA CHOICE Subscriptions, Freepost
RSHB-JSCH-ZUST, Future
Publishing, 10 Waterside Way,
Northampton NN4 7XD

TERMS AND CONDITIONS You will receive 13 issues per year. Please allow 28 days for delivery of gift. In the unlikely event of stocks becoming exhausted, we reserve the right to substitute with items of a similar value or extend your subscription by one issue free of charge. This is a UK-only offer and the gift applies only to those paying via Direct Debit. Your subscription will start with the next available issue. Please tick here if you do NOT wish to receive relevant information about products or services from Future Publishing or any of its group companies by post or telephone. Minimum subscription term is 12 months. If at any time during the first 60 days you are dissatisfied please notify us in writing and we will refund you for all unmailed issues.

OFFER CODE HCCP15

OFFER ENDS 30 NOVEMBER, 2010

**Pontin's Holiday Park
Camber Sands**

**3rd-5th February
2011 AD**

**WE HAVE LIFT OFF!
ON SALE NOW!**

SFX WEEKENDER

SFX Weekender returns with 72 hours of non-stop guest star talks, screenings, author panels, music, videogaming, merchandise, quizzes, parties, signings and the legendary SFX Awards!

Terry Pratchett joins the SFX Weekender line up

**GEORGE
TAKEI**

**aka Star Trek's
Mr Sulu and
star of Heroes**

**TERRY
PRATCHETT**
the celebrated
Discworld
author

**CRAIG
CHARLES**

**aka
Red Dwarf's
Dave Lister**

**VIP SOLD OUT. GOLD PLUS, GOLD AND SILVER AVAILABLE BUT SELLING FAST.
TO BOOK YOUR TICKETS CALL THE TICKET HOTLINE: 08700 110034
For the latest information visit www.sfxweekender.com**

Guests appearances subject to work commitments. 3rd February only available to VIP and Gold Plus ticket holders.
Check the website for up to date details of guests and for full terms and conditions.

In association with

dtsTM
Digital Entertainment

SELECT

→ **Buying Guide** **BEST EVER LCD TV** The top performing LCD screens in the UK
HI-DEF PLAYERS Looking for a Blu-ray deck? We help you choose **PLASMA POWER** Your guide to
the ultimate bigscreen TV **ROCKIN' RECEIVERS** The best specs and latest codecs **SUPREME**
SPEAKERS Need a 5.1 package? We name the best! **PLUS** subwoofers, projectors, PVRs & more...

TOP
BUYER'S GUIDE
**All killer
no
filler**



HCC Ratings key

Officially awesome 1 2 3 4 5
Essential purchase 1 2 3 4 5
Does the job 1 2 3 4 5
Disappointing 1 2 3 4 5
Don't touch it 1 2 3 4 5

LCD TV

Best on test...



SONY
46in → KDL-40EX503
£900 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

LCD with built-in Freeview HD tuner and Bravia Internet Video

Highs: Free HD channels on tap; value for money; 'net interactivity'

Lows: CCFL backlight

→ Specifications

HD Ready: Yes (to 1080p)
1920 x 1080 resolution
No. of HDMI inputs: 4
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (2 RGB)
No. of component inputs: 1
PC input: 1
Digital tuner: Yes, Freeview HD

Tested: Issue 181
For more info visit:
www.sony.co.uk



SONY
60in → KDL-60LX903
£3,500 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Flagship 3D set from Sony is a real bigscreen beauty

Highs: Integrated 3D; intuitive GUI; cinematic HD pictures

Lows: Weak audio; 2D-3D quality is source-dependent

→ Specifications

HD Ready: Yes (to 1080p)
1920 x 1080 resolution
No. of HDMI inputs: 4
No. of Scart inputs: 1 (RGB)
No. of component inputs: 1
PC input: 1
Digital tuner: Yes, Freeview HD

Tested: Issue 186
For more info visit:
www.sony.co.uk



SAMSUNG
40in → UE-40C7000
£1,800 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Debut 3DTV stands out in other areas, too

Highs: Next-gen tech; Freeview HD tuner; app store

Lows: Fiddly control system; 3D effect needs a bigger display

→ Specifications

HD Ready: Yes (to 1080p)
1920 x 1080 resolution
No. of HDMI inputs: 4
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (1 RGB)
No. of component inputs: 1
PC input: Via HDMI only
Digital tuner: Yes, Freeview HD

Tested: Issue 180
For more info visit:
www.samsung.co.uk



LG
47in → 47LE8900
£2,100 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Full LED-backlit LCD with LG's NetCast feature and THX cred

Highs: Smart fascia and interface; good colours and contrast; great calibration tools

Lows: Limited web content

→ Specifications

HD Ready: Yes (to 1080p)
1920 x 1080 resolution
No. of HDMI inputs: 4
No. of Scart inputs: 1 (RGB)
No. of component inputs: 1
PC input: 1
Digital tuner: Yes, Freeview HD

Tested: Issue 184
For more info visit:
www.lge.com/uk



SHARP
46in → LC-46LE821E
£2,000 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Quad Pixel edge-lit LED TV with innovative in-built Flash PVR

Highs: Amazing levels of fine detail; great colour fidelity; useful Time Shift function

Lows: No video streaming

→ Specifications

HD Ready: Yes (to 1080p)
1920 x 1080 resolution
No. of HDMI inputs: 4
No. of Scart inputs: 1 (RGB)
No. of component inputs: 1
PC input: 1
Digital tuner: Yes, Freeview HD

Tested: Issue 182
For more info visit:
www.sharp.co.uk

Also Recommended...



LG
55in → 55LX9900
£3,700 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

LG's Active Shutter premium 3D screen benefits from its size

Highs: 2D and 3D pics have cinematic scale and punch; good calibration tools

Lows: Crosstalk; weak audio

→ Specifications

HD Ready: Yes (to 1080p)
1920 x 1080 resolution
No. of HDMI inputs: 4
No. of Scart inputs: 1 (RGB)
No. of component inputs: 2
PC input: 1
Digital tuner: Freeview HD

Tested: Issue 185
For more info visit:
www.lge.com/uk



SAMSUNG
32in → LE40B650
£700 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Look for good deals on this 2009-Issue 40in LCD

Highs: Superb features; excellent all-round pics; design

Lows: Audio performance is pretty pathetic

→ Specifications

HD Ready: Yes (to 1080p)
1920 x 1080 resolution
No. of HDMI inputs: 4
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (1 RGB)
No. of component inputs: 1
PC input: 1
Digital tuner: Yes

Tested: Issue 180
For more info visit:
www.samsung.co.uk



LG
42in → 42SL9000
£1,000 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

LG's LED-lit 'Seamless' LCD offers excellent value for money

Highs: Exceptional pictures; ISF-certified calibrated controls

Lows: Black levels aren't A-list; 'Seamless' design isn't all that

→ Specifications

HD Ready: Yes (to 1080p)
1920 x 1080 resolution
No. of HDMI inputs: 4
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (1 RGB)
No. of component inputs: 1
PC input: 1
Digital tuner: Yes

Tested: Issue 178
For more info visit:
www.lge.com/uk

Editor's Choice...

SAMSUNG
55in → UE55C9000
£7,000 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

The 55in Series 9 stands as the crowning glory of Samsung's TV design and technology divisions.

It's an extraordinary product which warrants its lofty position in the range, and is a great example of just how accomplished an LCD can be – none of Samsung's rivals have a comparable 'statement' product. As a feature-packed set (3D, 2D-3D conversion, Internet@TV, media streaming) it represents the leading edge in functionality, and the picture quality is exquisite. Once you've seen one in action, you'll want one.

Tested: Issue 185
For more info visit: www.samsung.co.uk

→ Specifications

HD Ready: Yes (to 1080p)
1920 x 1080 resolution
No. of HDMI inputs: 4
No. of Scart inputs: 1 (RGB)
No. of component inputs: 1
PC input: 1
Digital tuner: Yes, Freeview HD



Plasma TV

Best on test...



PIONEER
60in → KRP-600A
£5,000 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Kuro with separate media box, Ethernet and satellite tuner

Highs: Awesome black levels; colour accuracy; slim panel; media-savvy

Lows: Problems with AVI files

→ Specifications

HD Ready: Yes (up to 1080p)
1920 x 1080 resolution
No. of HDMI inputs: 4
No. of Scart inputs: 3 (2 RGB)
No. of component inputs: 1
PC input: Yes
Digital tuner: Yes and DVB-S2 tuner

Tested: Issue 164
For more info visit:
www.pioneer.co.uk



PANASONIC
65in → TX-P65VT20
£4,500 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

The biggest 3D TV currently available is worth the high ticket

Highs: High-impact bigscreen pictures; minimal crosstalk with 3D images

Lows: Sucks electricity

→ Specifications

HD Ready: Yes (up to 1080p)
1920 x 1080 resolution
No. of HDMI inputs: 4
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (2 RGB)
No. of component inputs: 1
PC input: Yes
Digital tuner: Yes, Freeview HD and Freesat HD

Tested: Issue 186
For more info visit:
www.panasonic.co.uk



PANASONIC
46in → TX-P46Z1
£4,300 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

THX-certified, ultrathin PDP with wireless transmission

Highs: Stunning HD and SD pictures; gorgeous design; good features set

Lows: Premium price point

→ Specifications

HD Ready: Yes (up to 1080p)
1920 x 1080 resolution
No. of HDMI inputs: 4
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (2 RGB)
No. of component inputs: 1
PC input: Yes
Digital tuner: Yes and Freesat HD

Tested: Issue 172
For more info visit:
www.panasonic.co.uk



PANASONIC
50in → TX-P50G20
£1,500 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Freeview HD and Freesat HD plasma is the FTA king

Highs: Performance; price; Freesat/Freeview HD tuners;

Lows: USB recording mode comes with strings attached

→ Specifications

HD Ready: Yes (up to 1080p)
1920 x 1080 resolution
No. of HDMI inputs: 4
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (2 RGB)
No. of component inputs: 1
PC input: Yes
Digital tuner: Yes, Freeview HD and Freesat HD

Tested: Issue 182
For more info visit:
www.pioneer.co.uk



LG
32in → 32P66000
£500 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

World's smallest 32in plasma challenges LCD rivals

Highs: Smooth movement; good blacks and connectivity

Lows: Lack of detail; some jagged edges; average audio

→ Specifications

HD Ready: Yes
1024 x 720 resolution
No. of HDMI inputs: 4
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (1 RGB)
No. of component inputs: 1
PC input: Yes
Digital tuner: Yes

Tested: Issue 162
For more info visit:
www.lge.com/uk

Also Recommended...



LG
50in → 50PG6000
£1,100 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Superb HD Ready plasma offering great value for money

Highs: Extensive calibration possibilities; excellent black level; sexy bezel

Lows: Not Full HD

→ Specifications

HD Ready: Yes
1366 x 768 resolution
No. of HDMI inputs: 4
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (1 RGB)
No. of component inputs: 1
PC input: 1
Digital tuner: Yes

Tested: Issue 154
For more info visit:
www.lge.com/uk



PANASONIC
42in → TX-P42G15
£850 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Freesat HD NeoPDP at an enticing price

Highs: Wide viewing angle; excellent HD pics

Lows: Lacks brightness; three HDMI only

→ Specifications

HD Ready: Yes
1920 x 1080 resolution
No. of HDMI inputs: 3
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (2 RGB)
No. of component inputs: 1
PC input: Yes
Digital tuner: Yes and Freesat HD

Tested: Issue 180
For more info visit:
www.panasonic.co.uk



SAMSUNG
50in → PS50A556
£1,000 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Bargain-priced monster screen with a few caveats

Highs: Superb specification; great build quality; sharp detail

Lows: Some motion artefacts and noise visible

→ Specifications

HD Ready: Yes (up to 1080p)
1920 x 1080 resolution
No. of HDMI inputs: 3
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (1 RGB)
No. of component inputs: 1
PC input: Yes
Digital tuner: Yes

Tested: Issue 161
For more info visit:
www.samsung.co.uk

Editor's Choice...

PANASONIC
50in → TX-P50VT20
£2,000 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

The arrival of Panasonic's first 3DTV was always going to get the AV juices running, and this 50in plasma doesn't disappoint – 3D Blu-ray material comes over sharp and smooth with no visible crosstalk, while Sky's half-resolution 3D preview channel is revelatory, with sports coverage in particular showing excellent depth and detail. Other highlights of this surprisingly affordable 3D set include the two pairs of supplied eyewear, class-leading 2D hi-def picture performance, and savvy networking skills.

Tested: Issue 183
For more info visit: www.panasonic.co.uk

→ Specifications

HD Ready: yes (up to 1080p)
Native resolution: 1,920 x 1,080
No. of HDMI inputs: 4 (v1.4)
No. of Scart inputs: 2 (RGB)
No. of component inputs: 1
PC input: Yes
Digital tuner: Freeview HD and Freesat HD

Blu-ray Players

Best on test...



DENON
Blu-ray → DVD-A1UD
£4,500 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Reference universal Blu-ray player that sets new standards

Highs: Stunning life-like picture; genuine hi-fi sound; awesome DVD upscaling
Lows: Complex to set up; not for those on a budget!

→ Specifications

Blu-ray profile: 2.0
DVD upscaling: Up to 1080p
Multichannel phono out: Yes (7.1)
Onboard Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA decoding: w
Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA bitstream output: Yes/Yes
DVD-A/SACD playback: Yes/Yes
Networkability: Ethernet

Tested: Issue 178
For more info visit:
www.denon.co.uk



SAMSUNG
Blu-ray → BD-C6900
£350 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Early adopters will love this 3D Blu-ray player

Highs: 3D compatibility; video quality; USB file support
Lows: v1.4 HDMI output means hookup to older AVRs will be via 7.1 outputs

→ Specifications

Blu-ray profile: 2.0
DVD upscaling: Up to 1080p
Multichannel phono out: Yes (7.1)
Onboard Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA decoding: Yes/Yes
Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA bitstream output: Yes/Yes
DVD-A/SACD playback: No/No
Networkability: Ethernet; Wi-Fi; USB

Tested: Issue 181
For more info visit:
www.samsung.co.uk



SONY
Blu-ray → BDP-S570
£230 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

3D Blu-ray spinner is packed with features

Highs: SACD playback; BBC iPlayer onboard
Lows: No multichannel phono outputs means you'll need a v1.4 AVR for 3D lossless audio

→ Specifications

Blu-ray profile: 2.0
DVD upscaling: Up to 1080p
Multichannel phono out: No (stereo only)
Onboard Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA decoding: Yes/Yes
Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA bitstream output: Yes/Yes
DVD-A/SACD playback: Yes/No
Networkability: Ethernet; Wi-Fi; USB, iPlayer, LoveFilm

Tested: Issue 185
For more info visit:
www.sony.co.uk



LG
Blu-ray → BD570
£200 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

LG's new deck is an ideal media player-cum-BD deck

Highs: Media streaming and networking; disc loading speed; integrated Wi-Fi
Lows: No internal memory for BD-Live; UI has inconsistencies

→ Specifications

Blu-ray profile: 2.0
DVD upscaling: Up to 1080p
Multichannel phono out: No (stereo only)
Onboard Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA decoding: Yes/Yes
Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA bitstream output: Yes/Yes
DVD-A/SACD playback: No/No
Networkability: Ethernet; Wi-Fi; USB

Tested: Issue 186
For more info visit:
www.lge.com/uk



PANASONIC
Blu-ray → DMP-BDT300
£400 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

3D BD deck to work in tandem with the brand's 3D plasmas

Highs: Solid AV performance; 3D material is sharp, smooth and involving; twin HDMI outputs
Lows: Wi-Fi is by dongle only

→ Specifications

Blu-ray profile: 2.0
DVD upscaling: Up to 1080p
Multichannel phono out: Yes (7.1)
Onboard Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA decoding: Yes/Yes
Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA bitstream output: Yes/Yes
DVD-A/SACD playback: No/No
Networkability: Ethernet; optional Wi-Fi dongle; USB; SD slot

Tested: Issue 183
For more info visit:
www.panasonic.co.uk

Editor's Choice...

SONY
Blu-ray → BDP-S370 → £150 Approx

1 2 3 4 5



The first of Sony's 2010 Blu-ray players to come through the HCC Tech Labs has left us dying to see the higher-end models. This entry-level £150 machine is an absolute AV bargain, blowing its sub £200 rivals out of the water thanks to its superb XMB control interface, BBC iPlayer and LoveFilm online access, Super Audio CD playback and, of course, quality HD video and audio performance. More proof that the Big S's Blu-ray focus is more than just the PS3.

Tested: Issue 184
For more info visit: www.sony.co.uk

→ Specifications

Blu-ray profile: 2.0
DVD upscaling: Up to 1080p
Multichannel phono out: No (stereo only)
Onboard Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA decoding: Yes/Yes
Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA bitstream output: Yes/Yes
DVD-A/SACD playback: No/Yes
Networkability: Ethernet; Wi-Fi; 2 x USB; Bravia Internet Video
BBC iPlayer, LoveFilm, YouTube, etc

Also Recommended



PIONEER
Blu-ray → BDP-LX52
£500 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Stripped-down LX-branded player is a mid-range marvel

Highs: Class-leading picture and sound
Lows: Not simple to get to grips with; multichannel PQLS function only works on LPCM

→ Specifications

Blu-ray profile: 2.0
DVD upscaling: Up to 1080p
Multichannel phono out: No (stereo only)
Onboard Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA decoding: Yes/Yes
Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA bitstream output: Yes/Yes
DVD-A/SACD playback: No/No
Networkability: Ethernet for BD-Live; USB

Tested: Issue 176
For more info visit:
www.pioneer.co.uk



PANASONIC
Blu-ray → DMP-BD85
£300 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

New top-of-the line deck – until the 3D player arrives...

Highs: Overall picture and sound performance; 'Tube' sound emulator for CDs
Lows: Somewhat sluggish menus; Wi-Fi via dongle only

→ Specifications

Blu-ray profile: 2.0
DVD upscaling: Up to 1080p
Multichannel phono out: Yes (7.1)
Onboard Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA decoding: Yes/Yes
Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA bitstream output: Yes/Yes
DVD-A/SACD playback: No/No
Networkability: Ethernet; Wi-Fi via dongle; SD card slot; 2 x USB

Tested: Issue 180
For more info visit:
www.panasonic.co.uk



CAMBRIDGE AUDIO
Blu-ray → Azur 650BD
£400 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

First deck from UK brand is a solid performer – and multiregion DVD, too

Highs: Bulletproof build; excellent AV performance
Lows: No 'net features

→ Specifications

Blu-ray profile: 2.0
DVD upscaling: Up to 1080p
Multichannel phono out: Yes (7.1)
Onboard Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA decoding: Yes/Yes
Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD MA bitstream output: Yes/Yes
DVD-A/SACD playback: Yes/Yes
Networkability: Ethernet for BD-Live; 2 x USB

Tested: Issue 184
For more info visit:
www.cambridgeaudio.com

Recorders

Best on test...



PHILIPS
Freeview HD PVR →
HDT 8520
£250 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Our pick of the new Freeview HD PVRs so far

Highs: Good quality HD and SD pics; cutting-edge looks
Lows: No multimedia functions; EPG can be frustrating

→ Specifications

HDD size: 500GB
Twin tuners: Yes,
Freeview HD
HDMI: Yes, with 1080p
upscaling
Component output: No

Tested: Issue 185
For more info visit:
www.philips.co.uk



HUMAX
Freesat PVR → Foxsat HDR
£300 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

First Freesat HD PVR brings extra clout to fledgling system

Highs: Cinch to operate; good performance; ITV in HD; JPEG/MP3 playback
Lows: Annoying LCD; slow to boot up; needs more HD content!

→ Specifications

HDD size: 320GB
Twin tuners: Yes, Freesat HD (satellite – requires dish)
HDMI: Yes
Component output: No

Tested: Issue 165
For more info visit:
www.humaxdigital.com/uk



SAGEM
PVR → DTR67500T
£180 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

500GB Freeview+ PVR with USB archiving

Highs: Large HDD; flexible and intuitive EPG; picture quality is excellent
Lows: No way of importing recordings from other devices

→ Specifications

HDD size: 500GB
Twin tuners: Yes, Freeview
HDMI: Yes
Component output: Yes

Tested: Issue 173
For more info visit:
www.sagem.com/uk



DIGITALSTREAM
Freeview HD PVR →
DHR8203U
£300 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Versatile Freeview HD PVR from little-known Korean brand

Highs: Build quality; user interface; CI slot; plays JPEGs and MPEGs
Lows: Below-par SD pics

→ Specifications

HDD size: 500GB
Twin tuners: Yes,
Freeview HD
HDMI: Yes, with 1080p
upscaling
Component output: No

Tested: Issue 185
For more info visit:
www.dstreamtech.com



GRUNDIG
Freesat PVR →
GUFSDTR500HD
£280 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Dual-tuner Freesat+ PVR with capacious 500GB HDD

Highs: Easy to use; cool-running; efficient upscaling of non-HD channels
Lows: USB port is disabled

→ Specifications

HDD size: 500GB
Twin tuners: Yes, Freesat HD
HDMI: Yes
Component output: No

Tested: Issue 182
For more info visit:
www.grundig.co.uk

Also recommended



PIONEER
DVDR → DVR-560HX
£400 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Full PC-linked multimedia jukebox and DVD/HDD unit

Highs: Excellent AV performance and features spread; networkability
Lows: Jukebox abilities reliant on Windows Media Player

→ Specifications

HDD size: 160GB
Twin tuners: Yes, digital & analogue
HDMI: Yes
Component output: Yes
Camcorder input: Yes
Format: -R/RW, +R/RW, -RAM
Dual-layer recording: Yes

Tested: Issue 159
For more info visit:
www.pioneer.co.uk



PANASONIC
DVDR → DMR-EX773
£300 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

DVD/HDD recorder that misses out on Freeview HD

Highs: Solid AV performance; heaps of features and recording flexibility
Lows: No infra-red control over STB; single Freeview tuner only

→ Specifications

HDD size: 160GB
Twin tuners: No, 1 x digital only
HDMI: Yes
Component output: Yes
Camcorder input: No – USB/SD via USB instead
Format: -R/RW, +R/RW, -RAM
Dual-layer recording: Yes

Tested: Issue 182
For more info visit:
www.panasonic.co.uk



SAGEMCOM
Freeview HD PVR →
RT190-320 T2 HD
£250 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

First Freeview HD PVR from the Sagem rebrand

Highs: Good quality HD and SD pics; picture window in EPG
Lows: Antediluvian UI; sluggish menu system; ugly LED display

→ Specifications

HDD size: 320GB
Twin tuners: Yes, Freeview HD
HDMI: Yes, with 1080p upscaling
Component output: No

Tested: Issue 185
For more info visit:
www.sagemcomdigital.co.uk

Editor's Choice...

PANASONIC
DVD/BDR → DMR-BW880 → £800 Approx

1 2 3 4 5



Panasonic has followed last year's award-winning twin Freesat HD/Blu-ray recorder with this Freeview HD model. Again sporting a 500GB HDD, Profile 2.0 Blu-ray player/recorder and Viera Cast online interactivity, this deck solidifies Panasonic's status as the kings of convergence. Blu-ray playback is first-rate, and as a PVR the BW880 is unique in its flexibility. Other goodies, including Gracenote compatibility, DLNA certification, DV, SD and USB inputs add to its appeal. Not cheap, but true quality often isn't.

Tested: Issue 186
For more info visit: www.panasonic.co.uk

→ Specifications

Hard disk: 500GB
Twin Tuners: Yes 2 x Freeview HD
Component output: No
Format: BD-RE, BD-R, DVD-R/RW, +R/RW, -RAM
Dual-layer recording: Yes

AV Receivers

Best on test...



NAD
Amp/Processor
M25/M15HD
£6,600 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Classy heavyweight combo

Highs: Innovative modular design; excellent performance
Lows: No XLR jacks

→ Specifications

Power: 7 x 160W (8Ω)
Upscaling via HDMI: Yes
Tuner: Yes (AM/FM)
Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD: Yes
Zone 2: Yes, and 3
Serial port control: Yes
THX certification: No
Component input: 3
HDMI: 4-in, 1-out (v1.3)
Multichannel input: Yes (7.1)

Tested: Issue 183
For more info visit:
nadelectronics.com



YAMAHA
AVR → RX-V2065
£850 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

New-look Yamaha receiver is a great sub-£1K all-rounder

Highs: Superb networking prowess; wonderful natural sound that suits all material
Lows: GUI takes some getting used to

→ Specifications

Power: 7 x 130W (8Ω)
Upscaling via HDMI: Yes
Tuner: Yes (AM/FM/net)
Dolby TrueHD: Yes
DTS-HD: Yes
Zone 2: Yes, and 3
Serial port control: Yes
THX certification: No
Component input: 2
HDMI: 5-in, 2-out (v1.3)
Multichannel input: Yes (7.1)

Tested: Issue 179
For more info visit:
www.yamaha.co.uk



ONKYO
AVR → TX-NR5007
£2,200 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

9.2-channel HD receiver with exhaustive features and power

Highs: First-class home cinema performance; processing allows 9-channel height/width audio
Lows: No proprietary anti-jitter tech, Wi-Fi or secondary remote

→ Specifications

Power: 9 x 220W (6Ω)
Upscaling via HDMI: Yes
Tuner: Yes (AM/FM/net)
Dolby TrueHD: Yes
DTS-HD: Yes
Zone 2: Yes, and 3
Serial port control: Yes
THX certification: Yes, Ultra2 Plus
Component input: 3
HDMI: 8-in, 2-out (v1.3)
Multichannel input: Yes (7.1)

Tested: Issue 180
For more info visit:
www.eu.onkyo.com



ONKYO
Amp/Processor
PR-SC5500/PA-MC5500
£3,600 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Onkyo's separates system delivers on all AV fronts

Highs: Massive power reserves; Smooth AV performance
Lows: Sizeable and weighty

→ Specifications

Power: 9 x 220W (6Ω)
Upscaling via HDMI: Yes
Tuner: Yes (FM/AM/net)
Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD: Yes
Zone 2: Yes, and 3
Serial port control: Yes
THX certification: Ultra2 Plus
Component input: 3
HDMI: 8-in, 2-out (v1.3)
Multichannel input: Yes (7.1)

Tested: Issue 182
For more info visit:
www.eu.onkyo.com



PIONEER
AVR → SC-LX83
£2,000 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Pioneer's top-flight AVR mixes power, control and usability

Highs: Punchy, detailed, expansive sound; iControl app is superb; MCACC setup; RF remote handset
Lows: Seven-channel only

→ Specifications

Power: 7 x 190W (8Ω)
Upscaling via HDMI: Yes
Tuner: Yes (AM/FM)
Dolby TrueHD: Yes
DTS-HD: Yes
Zone 2: Yes, and 3
Serial port control: Yes
THX certification: Yes, Ultra2 Plus
Component input: 3
HDMI: 6-in, 2-out
Multichannel input: Yes (7.1)

Tested: Issue 186
For more info visit:
www.pioneer.co.uk

Editor's Choice...

DENON
AVR → AVR-4810
£2,800 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Denon's AVR-4810 is the current king of the new breed of receivers that make all sorts of speaker configurations possible. Thanks to Audyssey DSX and Dolby Pro-Logic IIz processing, it's capable of driving an 11.3-channel system (with the aid of an extra stereo amp), and it'll have you re-arranging your speakers in no time. Beyond this mastery of new formats, the AVR-4810 delivers a rich, powerful sound and a full suite of features from Net radio and integrated Wi-Fi to a wide choice of inputs and four-zone multiroom. Brilliant.

Tested: Issue 179
For more info visit: www.denon.co.uk

→ Specifications

Power: 9 x 140W (8Ω)
Upscaling to HDMI: Yes
Tuner: AM/FM/Net
Dolby TrueHD/DTS-HD: Yes/Yes
Zone 2: Yes and 3 & 4
Serial port control: Yes, 2
THX certification: No
Component input: 3
HDMI: 6-in, 2-out (v1.3)
Multichannel input: Yes (7.1)



Also Recommended...



SONY
AVR → STR-DH810
£300 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Feature-packed HDMI v1.4 AVR at a bargain price

Highs: Value for money; Dolby Pro-Logic IIz; immersive and realistic soundstage
Lows: Not great at high volumes; limited in power

→ Specifications

Power: 7 x 100W (8Ω)
Upscaling via HDMI: Yes
Tuner: Yes (AM/FM)
Dolby TrueHD: Yes
DTS-HD: Yes
Zone 2: No, unless you use S-Air wireless speakers
Serial port control: No
THX certification: No
Component input: 3
HDMI: 4-in, 1-out (v1.4)
Multichannel input: No

Tested: Issue 186
For more info visit:
www.sony.co.uk



ONKYO
AVR → TX-SR608
£450 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

3D-capable AVR delivers great value for money

Highs: Appealing price tag; big, fast, dynamic sound; solid video scaling
Lows: No networking or USB functionality; uninspiring build

→ Specifications

Power: 7 x 160W (6Ω)
Upscaling via HDMI: Yes
Tuner: Yes (AM/FM)
Dolby TrueHD: Yes
DTS-HD: Yes
Zone 2: Yes
Serial port control: No
THX certification: Select2 Plus
Component input: 2
HDMI: 6-in, 1-out (v1.4a)
Multichannel input: No

Tested: Issue 184
For more info visit:
www.eu.onkyo.com



DENON
AVR → AVR-4310
£1,900 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Audyssey DSX-toting AVR will change the way you think about speaker placement

Highs: Awesome sound as standard; extra width and height channels are a boon
Lows: Lacks the 9.1 DSX option

→ Specifications

Power: 7 x 130W (8Ω)
Upscaling via HDMI: Yes
Tuner: Yes (AM/FM/net)
Dolby TrueHD: Yes
DTS-HD: Yes
Zone 2: Yes, and 3
Serial port control: Yes
THX certification: No
Component input: 3
HDMI: 6-in, 2-out (v1.3)
Multichannel input: Yes (7.1)

Tested: Issue 173
For more info visit:
www.denon.co.uk

Projectors

Best on test...



INFOCUS
DLP → ScreenPlay SP8602
£3,000 Approx



New-look DLP projector from a much-revered brand

Highs: Excellent picture quality; good range of adjustments; different 'skins'
Lows: Not as flexible to set up as some; slightly noisy runner

→ Specifications

1920 x 1080 resolution
HDMI inputs: 2
Component inputs: 3
D-Sub: Yes
Brightness (claimed): 1,300 ANSI lumens
Contrast (claimed): 5,000:1
Lamp life (claimed): 2,500 hours
Fan noise: NA
24fps: Yes

Tested: Issue 182
For more info visit:
www.infocus.com



VIVITEK
DLP → H1085
£1,000 Approx



A brilliant Full HD projector at a mouth-watering price

Highs: Rich colours; excellent image tweaks; 12V trigger
Lows: Noisy runner in high brightness mode; some low-level noise in darker scenes

→ Specifications

1920 x 1080 resolution
HDMI inputs: 2
Component inputs: 1
D-Sub: Yes
Brightness (claimed): 2,000 ANSI lumens
Contrast (claimed): 5,000:1
Lamp life (claimed): 4,000 hours
Fan noise: 26dB
24fps: Yes

Tested: Issue 179
For more info visit:
www.vivitekcorp.com



SONY
SXRD → VPL-VW85
£5,400 Approx



Successor the VW80 delivers a truly cinematic picture

Highs: Astonishing contrast and detail levels; plenty of picture tweaks
Lows: MotionFlow tech is best left unused

→ Specifications

1920 x 1080 resolution
HDMI inputs: 2
Component inputs: 1
D-Sub: Yes
Brightness (claimed): 800 ANSI lumens
Contrast (claimed): 120,000:1
Lamp life (claimed): 3,000 hours
Fan noise: 20dB
24fps: Yes

Tested: Issue 174
For more info visit:
www.sony.co.uk/biz



EPSON
LCD → EH-TW5500
£4,000 Approx



Epson's flagship home cinema projector does LCD proud

Highs: Lots of features; easy and flexible to setup; produces the finest LCD pictures yet
Lows: More expensive than rivals; can lose focus a little

→ Specifications

1920 x 1080 resolution
HDMI inputs: 2
Component inputs: 1
D-Sub: Yes
Brightness (claimed): 1,600 ANSI lumens
Contrast (claimed): 200,000:1
Lamp life (claimed): 4,000 hours
Fan noise: 22dB
24fps: Yes

Tested: Issue 181
For more info visit:
www.epson.co.uk



PANASONIC
LCD → PT-AE4000
£2,500 Approx



Updated flagship PJ adds red-rich lamp and 12V trigger

Highs: Smooth filmic pictures; easy to setup and use; handy feature set
Lows: Boxy design; be careful with high frame-rate settings

→ Specifications

1920 x 1080 resolution
HDMI inputs: 2
Component inputs: 1
D-Sub: Yes
Brightness (claimed): 1,600 ANSI lumens
Contrast (claimed): 100,000:1
Lamp life (claimed): 2,000 hours
Fan noise: 22dB
24fps: Yes

Tested: Issue 177
For more info visit:
www.panasonic.co.uk

Also Recommended...



BENQ
DLP → W1000
£1,000 Approx



A £1K Full HD projector with good colour presets

Highs: Very sharp HD pictures; alluring tactile finish; plenty of fine-tuning options
Lows: Rainbow effect; noticeable fan noise

→ Specifications

1920 x 1080 resolution
HDMI inputs: 2
Component inputs: 1
D-Sub: Yes
Brightness (claimed): 2,000 ANSI lumens
Contrast (claimed): 3,000:1
Lamp life (claimed): 4,000 hours
Fan noise: 27dB
24fps: Yes

Tested: Issue 179
For more info visit:
benq.co.uk



OPTOMA
DLP → HD20
£900 Approx



Wallet-friendly model is an ideal first projector

Highs: Excellent detail resolution; reasonable contrast and brightness
Lows: Some fan noise; rainbow effect; limited throw distance

→ Specifications

1920 x 1080 resolution
HDMI inputs: 2
Component inputs: 1
D-Sub: Yes
Brightness (claimed): 1,700 ANSI lumens
Contrast (claimed): 500:1
Lamp life (claimed): 4,000 hours
Fan noise: 29dB
24fps: Yes

Tested: Issue 176
For more info visit:
www.optoma.co.uk



VIVITEK
DLP → H9080FD
£10,000 Approx



The world's first 'lampless' LED projector

Highs: Excellent colour fidelity; great definition; long lifespan
Lows: Lacks brightness; early adopters pay for the innovative LED tech

→ Specifications

1920 x 1080 resolution
HDMI inputs: 2
Component inputs: 1
D-Sub: No, use HDMI instead for PC hookup
Brightness (claimed): 1,000 ANSI lumens
Contrast (claimed): 15,000:1
Lamp life (claimed): 4,000 hours
Fan noise: NA
24fps: Yes

Tested: Issue 173
For more info visit:
www.vivitekcorp.com

Editor's Choice...

JVC
D-ILA → HD950
£6,000 Approx



Put simply, JVC's video-chucker is capable of an awe-inspiring performance. Spin up a Blu-ray and you'll be rewarded with three-dimensional, natural-looking pictures that are packed with detail, shadow subtlety and vibrant colours. Setting up the HD950 is made easy by its fully-motorised optical adjustments, and a THX-certified colour preset for those not wanting to get their hands dirty in its extensive calibration menus. It's an almost silent runner, too. The best PJ we've yet seen at this price point – and the recent HD990 upgrade improves on it even more!

Tested: Issue 179
For more info visit: www.jvc.co.uk

→ Specifications

1920 x 1080 resolution
HDMI inputs: 2
Component inputs: 1
D-Sub: Yes
Brightness (claimed): 900 ANSI lumens
Contrast (claimed): 50,000:1
Lamp life (claimed): 3,000 hours
Fan noise: 19dB
24fps: Yes

Speaker Systems

Best on test...



MONITOR AUDIO
5.1 → Platinum PL200AV
£11,500 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Gorgeous-looking, hi-tech 5.1 system for serious cinema

Highs: Dynamic, engaging sound with pin-sharp detail; taut, powerful bass; excellent build

Lows: Base plinths seem to belong to another design

→ Specifications

Power handling: 2 x 250W, 2 x 120W, 1 x 100W
Rears: Direct radiating
Subwoofer: 1 x 1,000W
Finish: Gloss; Bookshelf: No

Tested: Issue 184

For more info visit:
www.monitoraudio.com



CRYSTAL ACOUSTICS
5.1 → TX-T2-12
£1,300 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Great value THX Ultra2-certified array with a classy finish

Highs: Impressive full-range scale and power from relatively small speakers

Lows: Brash and unsubtle; not so good at low volumes

→ Specifications

Power handling: 2 x 150W, 3 x 100W
Rears: Dipoles
Subwoofer: 200W
Finish: Gloss Bookshelf: No

Tested: Issue 185

For more info visit:
www.crystallaudiovideo.com



ACOUSTIC ENERGY
5.1 → AEGIS Neo V2
£1,000 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Superior £1K system is excellent value for money

Highs: Classy build; dynamic, detailed and exciting audio performance; quality subwoofer

Lows: Sub controls may be daunting for beginners

→ Specifications

Power handling: 5 x 120W
Rears: Direct radiating
Subwoofer: 200W
Finish: Wood; Bookshelf: No

Tested: Issue 184

For more info visit:
www.acoustic-energy.co.uk



BOWERS & WILKINS
5.1 → CM Series
£4,250 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Top quality 5.1 array in a classical wood finish

Highs: True sweet highs from hi-tech tweeters; brilliant 10in woofer; solid construction

Lows: Square-edge design not exactly high-end

→ Specifications

Power handling: 3 x 200W, 2 x 120W
Rears: Direct radiating
Subwoofer: 500W
Finish: Wood; Bookshelf: No

Tested: Issue 179

For more info visit:
www.bowers-wilkins.com



TEUFEL
5.1 → System 8 THX Ultra2
£2,700 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

5.1 system with THX Ultra2 certification

Highs: Full-fat THX performance at a low-price; huge, potent subwoofer

Lows: Mail-order only means there's no chance to try before you buy

→ Specifications

Power handling: 3 x 120W, 2 x 80W
Rears: Dipole
Subwoofer: 600W
Finish: Gloss; Bookshelf: Yes

Tested: Issue 181

For more info visit:
www.teufel.eu

Also Recommended...



KLIPSCH
5.1 → Icon system
£2,700 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Sleek-looking US-made system with horn technology

Highs: High-quality audio; excellent value for money; clever, simple-to-use subwoofer

Lows: Not suited to largescale home cinema rooms

→ Specifications

Power handling: 2 x 125W, 2 x 75W, 1 x 100
Rears: Direct radiating
Subwoofer: 300W
Finish: Gloss; Bookshelf: No

Tested: Issue 180

For more info visit:
www.klipsch.co.uk



MONITOR AUDIO
5.1 → Silver RX6 AV12s
£2,200 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Gorgeous-looking, hi-tech 5.1 system for serious cinema

Highs: Dynamic, engaging sound with pin-sharp detail; taut, powerful bass; excellent build

Lows: Base plinths seem to belong to another design

→ Specifications

Power handling: 3 x 125, 1 x 80W; Rears: Dipolar
Subwoofer: 1 x 500W
Finish: Gloss;
Bookshelf: No

Tested: Issue 184

For more info visit:
www.monitoraudio.com



Q ACOUSTICS
5.1 → 2000 Series
£550 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Excellent 5.1 sub/sat system with living-room friendly looks

Highs: Detailed, compact satellites; alternative finishes/supports; tweakable sub

Lows: Slightly rough sound when extended; lack of high-frequency subtlety

→ Specifications

Power handling: 4 x 75W, 1 x 100W; Rears: Direct radiating
Subwoofer: 140W
Finish: Gloss;
Bookshelf: Yes

Tested: Issue 185

For more info visit:
www.qacoustics.co.uk

Editor's Choice...

KEF
5.1 → XQ Series
£5,000 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

This KEF 5.1 array mixes standmount surrounds with two hulking floorstanders to deliver a massive cinematic audio experience that's hard to fault – an ideal blend of deep bass, spacious mid-band and crystal clear treble. The design is gorgeous, too – another KEF masterclass in gloss black cabinets (curved to reduce internal reflections) and clearly taking a lead from the brand's awe-inspiring Reference system. Other variants of the speakers are available, so you can spec a more affordable, smaller-room setup should you wish.

Tested: Issue 174

For more info visit: www.kef.com/gb

→ Specifications

Power handling: 2 x 200W, 2 x 120W, 1 x 150W
Rears: Direct radiating
Subwoofer: 1 x 200W
Finish: Gloss
Bookshelf: No chance

Subwoofers

Best on test...



NAIM
SW → n-Sub
£1,600 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Class AB amp-driven premium-level subwoofer

Highs: Rich, textured bass with tight control; innovative features
Lows: High-end rivals have a bit more grunt to 'em

→ Specifications

Frequency response: 20Hz-250Hz (claimed)
Amplifier: 350W
Driver: 12in
Weight: 29.6kg
Enclosure: Sealed
On-board equaliser: Yes
Remote control: Yes

Tested: Issue 177
For more info visit:
www.naim-audio.com



POLK AUDIO
SW → DSW microPRO 2000
£1,200 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Massively potent stealth sub with excellent setup features

Highs: Huge sound; easy to use controls; automated room EQ
Lows: Other 8in subs are far more affordable

→ Specifications

Frequency response: 22Hz-200Hz (claimed)
Amplifier: 1,200W
Driver: 8in
Weight: 15.4kg
Enclosure: Sealed
On-board equaliser: Yes
Remote control: Yes

Tested: Issue 186
For more info visit:
www.polkaudio.com



PARADIGM
SW → Signature Sub 2
£7,250 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Reference grade sub for serious installs only

Highs: Astonishing power, control and speed; build quality is first-rate
Lows: Can you afford one?

→ Specifications

Frequency response: 7Hz-150Hz (claimed)
Amplifier: 4,500W
Driver: 6 x 10in
Weight: 105.7kg
Enclosure: Sealed
On-board equaliser: No
Remote control: No

Tested: Issue 183
For more info visit:
www.paradigm.com



TANNOY
SW → TS1201
£600 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

12in sub with simultaneous LFE and speaker level inputs

Highs: Smart looks; easy of use; real weight and presence
Lows: Remote control will cost you extra

→ Specifications

Frequency response: Down to 21Hz (claimed)
Amplifier: 500W
Driver: 12in
Weight: 16.7kg
Enclosure: Sealed
On-board equaliser: Yes
Remote control: No

Tested: Issue 179
For more info visit:
www.tannoy.com



REL
SW → T3
£430 Approx

1 2 3 4 5

Great value for money small-scale subwoofer

Highs: Superb performance from such a small unit
Lows: Dual input system may irritate some

→ Specifications

Frequency response: 30-120Hz (claimed)
Amplifier: 150W
Driver: 8in
Weight: 12.5kg
Enclosure: Sealed
On-board equaliser: No
Remote control: No

Tested: Issue 186
For more info visit:
www.rel.net

Free digital mags!

HCC now offers a range of free digital mags online to read, download and share. Go to:
www.homecinemachoice.com/e-zines

HCC
FOR NEWS,
REVIEWS,
VIDEO &
E-ZINES



KENTS PREMIER HOME ENTERTAINMENT SPECIALISTS

PIONEER KODO XW-NAC3 Digital Speaker Systems for iPod



"This compact and well-designed gadget sports no less than two docks that accommodate both iPods and iPhones." - EISA

MARANTZ SA8003 SACD Player



"Modern audio players face many challenges and Marantz's SA8003 meets them all. It plays CDs and the stereo tracks of SACDs. It handles MP3, AAC or WMA files via an advanced USB port, which can even control an iPod directly." - EISA

MONITOR AUDIO Standing Speakers



What Hi-Fi Sound & Vision Award Winning Bookshelf Speakers. "We have never heard anything better in the price range - ever."

- Authorised Dealers for over 50 manufacturers
- Experience 3D, Freeview HD and many more in our amazing showroom (7 Demonstration Suites)
- Huge Stock - Free Delivery
- Expert Independent Staff - Custom Installation and of course Great Prices



ihome
advanced interactive living

iHome
138 Pelham Road
Gravesend
Kent DA11 0JH
Tel: 01474 326600

EDC >
DIRECT

EDC
Unit 32
Acorn Industrial Estate
Crayford DA1 4AL
Tel: 01322 524999

www.ihomedirect.co.uk



LIGHTING

Starscape

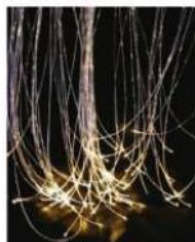
Fibre Optic & LED Lighting



Growing numbers of professional home cinema installers in the UK are turning to Starscape for fibre optic and LED solutions, not to mention our professional customers in Belgium, Switzerland, Portugal, South Africa, the Czech Republic and South Africa.

Photo: cinemadigital.be

However, we're also proud of the friendly, no-jargon service that we offer DIY home cinema enthusiasts. Our fibre optic and LED lighting can add that finishing touch to your room, and you'll find it surprisingly affordable, and easy to install. Creative use of lighting can make all the difference between just a room with a large TV/projector and a truly distinctive and personal space.



To learn how fibre optic and LED lighting can feature in your project phone 01289 388399 and speak to John or Peter, or e-mail info@starscape.co.uk. See the website for step-by-step home cinema lighting project reports.



7 Main Street

Lowick, Berwick upon Tweed, Northumberland. TD15 2UD.

E: info@starscape.co.uk T: +44 (1289) 388399 F: 388507

HD CABLES AND CONNECTIONS

TV Cables

Techlink HDMI cables

680201 1m HDMI £27.99

680202 2m HDMI £33.99

680205 5m HDMI £59.99

680209 10m HDMI £94.89

680207 15m HDMI £128.99

Perfect for connecting
HD DVD, Blu Ray DVD
and Sky HD etc

700202 (XS202) 2m HDMI £52.99

700205 (XS205) 5m HDMI £74.99

Please see
website for latest
prices

3 x 1 HDMI switch



3 x 1 HDMI switch, suitable for all HD resolutions including 1080p
Price £23.99

LINDY
CONNECTION PERFECTION

PROFIGOLD

AND MANY MORE

www.TVCables.co.uk

FOR THE BEST UK PRICES ON QUALITY AV CABLES

sales@tvcables.co.uk 020 7100 4874

HOME CINEMA RACKS

Hi Fi Racks Ltd

Bespoke Audio Visual Furniture

Create excellence in audio performance and appearance with our beautiful tailor-made racks in the best solid hardwoods

WINNER! 2009
Hi Fi Racks Podium Range

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
AWARDS 2009
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
HIFI RACKS PODIUM

HI-FI CHOICE
Awards 2009 Winner



We manufacture racks to suit Naim • Linn • Arcam
• AVI • Cyrus • Denon • Meridian • Marantz • Nad
• Quad • Teac • Rotel • and many more.

Made in beautiful hardwoods such as Oak • Ash
• Cherry • Walnut • Maple • and many more.



www.hifiracks.co.uk

Phone 01572 756447
Fax 01572 756447
Email Info@hifiracks.co.uk

Hi Fi Racks Ltd, Unit 24F
Pillings Road, Oakham
Rutland, LE15 6QF

STORES: Basically Sound and Vision Norfolk • Stoneaudio U.K. Limited Poole • Phase 3 Worthing Worthing • Audiofile Limited Bishop's Stortford • Home Media Limited Maidstone • Audience Bath • Tavistock Audio Tavistock • Wilkinsons Hi-Fi Ltd Lancashire • The Audio Room Hull • The Sound Organisation Ltd York • Audio Affair Birmingham • Divine Audio Market Harborough • James Morrow Edinburgh • Musicraft Derby • Frank Harvey Coventry • Audio Emotion Leven • The Home Cinema Centre Edinburgh • Cloney Audio County Dublin, Ireland

PROJECTORS AND SCREENS

Crosby & Bown



Projector Screen Specialists

Tel: 01636 639 900

Online Sales & Ebay Shop

www.CrosbyandBownLtd.co.uk
stores.shop.ebay.co.uk/Crosby-and-Bown

MIDLANDS



SOUND & VISION CENTER



Demonstration Studios
Cinema Theatre
Home Installation
Multiroom Specialists
In House Service Dept
Mail Order Available

152 High Street, Bloxwich, Walsall

01922 493499

Late Night Thursday

www.soundacademy.co.uk

SOUTH WEST

dawsons

defining sound & vision since 1927



Experts in Sensory Stimulation.

With over 80 years experience in the Home Cinema sector, Dawsons are renowned for supplying, designing and installing award winning systems in businesses, homes and on luxury yachts.

Featuring latest products from Bang & Olufsen, Meridian, Crestron, Kaleidescape and many other brands, Dawsons offer a range of home cinemas to suit every budget.

Famed for our outstanding aftercare, the worlds leading audio-visual brands place their trust in Dawsons, and so can you.

74 Poole Rd Bournemouth BH4 9DZ t: 01202 764965

www.dawsonsgroup.com

MERIDIAN CRESTRON LUTRON kaleidescape



Home Cinema Seating Specialists

Premiere
Home Cinema Seating
buy now at drinkstuff.com

Single & Multiple Seat Options
Black & Brown Seats In Stock

Leather & Micro Fibre Cloth available in custom colours upon request

drinkstuff
keeping you entertained

Next Day Delivery Available

Free Delivery | Personal Service

Special Features:
Italian leather - Grade 5
Inclining back & foot rest
Lumbar heated support
10 point massage system
Cup cooler & warmer
Optional mini fridge

www.drinkstuff.com/cinema | 0845 313 3352

WEB DIRECTORY

progressive audiovisual

01892 8608001

New e-commerce store online now!

www.progressive-av.com

Home Automation - Multi-Room - Home Cinema - Smart Lighting



BOSE HITACHI JVC Panasonic PHILIPS Pioneer SHARP SONY TOSHIBA

Top Brands. Lowest Prices. Call 020 8924 7744.

www.rgbdirect.co.uk

rgb
hi-fi & video

Authorised Dealer of All Major UK Brands
hiwayhifi.com

BUY NOW PAY LATER!
INTEREST FREE CREDIT for 9 Months

08700 429 430

PLASMA & LCD TV | DVD/HDD & BLU-RAY | HOME CINEMA | HI-FI & PORTABLE AUDIO | CAMCORDERS & CAMERAS | CAR HIFI & NAVIGATION

THE listening rooms

★★★★★
NOW CELEBRATING OUR 20TH YEAR
★★★★★

161 Old Brompton Road, London SW5 0LJ
T: 020 7244 7759 F: 020 7370 0192

W: www.thelisteningrooms.com
E: info@thelisteningrooms.com

Home Cinema Specialists

Full Home Automation, Projectors, Amps, Surround Sound, Satellite Systems, Sky HD, Custom Installations

THX Certified Professional Home Theatre 1

In-store Demo Room (pictured above)

44 Main St. Mexborough S. Yorks S64 9DU
TEL: 01709 587967 07931539197
www.ethecinema.co.uk

Projection Screen Material

SCREEN FABRICS SUITABLE FOR MAKING OR REPLACING THE EXISTING MATERIAL ON YOUR PRESENT SCREEN

MATT WHITE

- ★ Top quality heavy duty with re-inforced glass fibre black backing.
- ★ Available in two widths
 - 181cm wide at £37.00 per linear metre
 - 243cm wide at £59.00 or part metre

REAR SCREEN MATERIAL

- ★ Superb picture quality
- ★ Available in one width
 - 243cm wide at £60 per linear metre or part metre
- ★ Carriage £10.00 for order value under £100

We have a full range of screens:

- ★ Electric
- ★ Manual
- ★ Fixed frame
- ★ Floor
- ★ Custom made



DRH SCREENS

SCREEN MATERIALS AT LOW PRICES
VISIT WWW.DRHSCREENS.CO.UK
OR CALL 020 8885 5504

(All prices including vat)

50 YEARS OF SCREEN MANUFACTURING

Get Cash

for your Old TV!

PAYMENT WITHIN 5 DAYS

We pay up to **£1000** for a used TV!

For a FREE valuation visit:
www.trading4u.com/sell-lcd

TRADING4U

catch the team on the .net forum/add us to your RSS reader/subscribe to the magazine/get the latest features and tutorials/enjoy the website



.net

/develop/discover/design

The world's best-selling magazine for web designers and developers also has a website, where you can find a host of great features and tutorials. You'll find a selection of the best articles to appear in .net, as well as extended

versions of interviews and Q&As. You can also access the latest subscription offers online, and learn more about what the latest issue has in store.

As well as a bucketload of great articles, .net also boasts a thriving forum,

which continues to provide visitors with help, advice and random jibber jabber.

And if you'd like to catch up with the latest links in the magazine, visit our delicious page at delicious.com/netmag. Enjoy!

visit us online today at

www.netmag.co.uk

COMING NEXT IN

HCC

ISSUE
#188 ON SALE
Oct 21

Red-hot tech



HCC brings you all the major stories and product launches from this year's massive IFA technology expo!

→ Next issue

SONY Bravia LCD with in-built Blu-ray player
VELOCITY Monster 15in subwoofer from the kings of LFE
SAMSUNG Blu-ray and HD PVR combi deck
YAMAHA 3D-ready AV receiver
CANTON 5.1 floorstander speaker system
ROUNDUP Five 32in Freeview HD TVs are put through their paces
PLUS: In-depth news, Blu-ray reviews and more

CONTENTS SUBJECT TO CHANGE, BUT ONLY FOR THE BETTER

If you can't always find a copy of this magazine, help is at hand! Complete this form and hand in at your local store, they'll arrange for a copy of each

issue to be reserved for you. Some stores may even be able to arrange for it to be delivered to your home. Just ask!

Subject to availability



Please reserve/deliver my copy of on a regular basis, starting with issue _____

HOME CINEMA
CHOICE

Title _____ First name _____

Surname _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Telephone number _____

If you don't want to miss an issue



Cables / Interconnects

AV Receivers

Speakers

AV Stands And Mounts

Free Delivery on all Orders Over £10 • Free Installation Advice • Custom Cable Service

Alphason AV Furniture

AV STAND BARGAINS!

Save up to 74% on Alphason Designs dedicated AV stands and cabinets. Clearance prices while stocks last.

alphason

FREE DELIVERY
All Alphason AV stands are flat packed and delivered free anywhere in mainland UK.



Alphason AP1100GR
AV Cabinet with drawer

Save
74%

RRP £299.99
Now **£76.99**
Save **£223**



Alphason ABK1100S
open AV Cabinet

Save
54%

RRP £169.99
Now **£89.99**
Save **£80**

Demo Facilities



Appointment Only ☎ **01706 878444**

The North-West's premier home cinema demo facility. Come and try before you buy in our premium cinema suite! Just a short drive from the M60, M62, M65, and M66 motorways.

Unit 5, The Sidings
New Line Ind. Est.
Bacup, Lancashire
OL13 9RW

Boston Acoustics SoundWare 5.1



£319.00
Delivered

"Budget system worth shouting about"
What Hi-Fi

WHAT HI-FI?
★★★★★
05/10

Bargain QED Classic HDMI Cables

Qunex Classic HDMI Cables in white. 1m, 2m, 3m and 5m available.

From
£11.99

WHAT HI-FI?
★★★★★
11/08



Yamaha AV Receivers



We now stock Yamaha AV Receivers: RX-V367, RX-V467 and RX-V 667.

WHAT HI-FI?
★★★★★
06/10

Prices Start
£178.99

Or bundle with the fantastic Jamo A102's!

Only
£388



QED Silver Anniversary XT Evolution



QED

WHAT HI-FI?
★★★★★
10/09

A rare chance to secure premium speaker cable by QED for a rock bottom price.

30%
Off

~~£5.85 / m~~
£4.00 / m

QED Speaker Cables

QED Micro Speaker Cable
£1.80 per / metre

QED Original Speaker Cable
£3.15 per / metre

QED Silver Anniversary
£4.00 per / metre

QED Silver Anniversary XT
£5.40 per / metre 07/08

QED Silver Anniversary XT Evolution
~~£5.65~~ £4.00 per / metre 10/09

QED Silver Anniversary XT Bi-Wire
£10.80 per / metre 10/06

QED Revelation Speaker Cable
£13.50 per / metre 10/08

QED Aircloc Banana Plugs and Spades Available

X-TUBE™
QED

WHAT HI-FI?
★★★★★

WHAT HI-FI?
★★★★★

WHAT HI-FI?
★★★★★

WHAT HI-FI?
★★★★★

WHAT HI-FI?
★★★★★

Order Online

Purchase through our secure website 24 hours a day.



www.audiovisualonline.co.uk



**Price
Promise**

Seen a product somewhere cheaper?
We'll endeavour to match or beat any genuine advertised price elsewhere. Just get in touch and tell us where you've seen the product advertised and we'll try our best to match or beat it.

☎ **01706 878444**

@ info@audiovisualonline.co.uk

Free Gift For Any Order Over £100



FREE!!
Travel Speakers

**WORTH
£17.99!**

Spend over £100 and receive a free Goldring Transition Soundbag; a great little travel speaker which is compatible with any portable music player. Just use voucher code **SOUNDBAG** during checkout or quote if making a telephone order.

Home Cinema Bundle Grid

If you're planning to make a surround sound purchase, you can save a huge amount of money by purchasing a bundle package; AV receiver, speakers and cables all in one price.

All our bundles in the grid come with a free bespoke Fisual* cable bundle to get you started, worth between £112.95 and £262.92 depending on the package.

* Upgrade to QED cables may mean slight price increase.



Cable bundle includes:

- 30m speaker cable
- Banana plugs
- 1m HDMI cable
- 1.5m optical cable
- 2.5m subwoofer cable

Speakers ➤	Canton Movie 60CX	Canton Movie 120MX	Jamo A102	Boston Acoustics SW 5.1	KEF KHT2005 K2 Sub	KEF KHT3005 K2 Sub	KEF KHT3005 HTB Sub	KEF C Series AV1	Q Acoustics 2000 Series (Matt Finish)	Q Acoustics 2000 Series (Gloss)
AV Receiver ▼										
Onkyo TX-SR308	£439.99	£608.99	£408.99	£539.99	£819.99	£919.99	£960.99	£869.99	£714.99	£804.99
Onkyo TX-SR508	£491.99	£679.99	£508.99	£619.99	£899.99	£999.99	£1,030.99	£949.99	£794.99	£884.99
Onkyo TX-SR608	£649.99	£838.99	£658.99	£749.99	£1,049.99	£1,149.99	£1,199.99	£1,027.99	£944.99	£1,034.99
Denon AVR-1911	£649.99	£838.99	£658.99	£749.99	£1,049.99	£1,149.99	£1,199.99	£992.99	£944.99	£1,034.99
Denon AVR-2311	£799.99	£1,188.99	£1,008.99	£1,099.99	£1,399.99	£1,346.99	£1,399.99	£1,237.99	£1,294.99	£1,384.99
Yamaha RX-V367	£379.99	£567.99	£387.99	£498.99	£778.99	£878.99	£925.99	£817.99	£673.99	£763.99
Yamaha RX-V467	£456.99	£657.99	£477.99	£588.99	£868.99	£968.99	£1,067.99	£887.99	£763.99	£853.99
Yamaha RX-V667	£648.99	£837.99	£657.99	£768.99	£1,048.99	£1,148.99	£1,247.99	£992.99	£943.99	£1,033.99
Save Up To (%)	43%	33%	43%	41%	32%	35%	32%	32%	33%	31%
Save Up To (££)	£326	£318	£309	£378	£408	£611	£611	£565	£368	£368



The new **mx** series



"...a mature, exciting sound at a price that made us do a double-take."

"Mission has once again delivered a great budget speaker."



mission

IAG House Sovereign Court Ermine Business Park Huntingdon Cambridgeshire
PE29 6XU Tel 01480 447700 Fax 01480 431767 www.mission.co.uk